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THE JOY OF LIVING

HERMANN SUDERMANN

Translated by

EDITH WHARTON

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THE JOY OF LIVING

(ES LEBE DAS LEBEN)

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A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

BY

HERMANN SUDERMANN

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

EDITH WHARTON

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Translator's Note

The translation of dramatic dialogue is attended with special difficulties, and these are peculiarly marked in translating from German into English. The German sentence carries more ballast than English readers are accustomed to, and while in translating narrative one may, by means of subordinate clauses, follow the conformation of the original, it is hard to do so in rendering conversation, and virtually impossible when the conversation is meant to be spoken on the stage. To English and American spectators the long German speeches are a severe strain on the attention, and even in a translation intended only for the "closet" a too faithful adherence to German construction is not the best way of doing justice to the original.

Herr Sudermann's dialogue is more concise than that of many other German dramatists; yet in translation his sentences and speeches need to be divided and recast: to preserve the spirit, the letter must be modified. This is true not only of the construction of his dialogue but also of his forms of expression. Wherever it has been possible, his analogies, his al-

lusions, his " tours de phrase," have been scrupulously followed; but where they seemed to obscure his meaning to English readers some adaptation has been necessary. Apart from these trifling changes, the original has been closely followed; and such modifications as have been made were suggested solely by the wish to reproduce Herr Sudermann's meaning more closely than a literal translation would have allowed.

CHARACTERS

Count Michael von Kellinghausen.
Beata, his wife.
Ellen, their daughter.
Baron Richard von Völkerlingk.
Leonie, his wife.
Norbert, their son, reading for the Bar.
Baron Ludwig von Völkerlingk (Secretary of State, Richard's step-brother).
Prince Usingen.
Baron von Brachtmann.
Herr von Berkelwitz-Grünhof.
Dr. Kahlenberg (Privy Councillor at the Board of Physicians).
Holtzmann (candidate for Holy Orders, private secretary to Baron Richard von Völkerlingk).
Meixner.
A Physician.
Conrad, servant at Count Kellinghausen's.
George, Baron Richard's servant.
Another Servant.

The scene is laid in Berlin—the first three and the fifth acts at the house of Count Kellinghausen; the fourth act at Baron Richard Völkerlingk's.

Period: about 1899.

ACT I

THE JOY OF LIVING

ACT I

A drawing-room in the Empire style in COUNT KELLINGHAUSEN'S *house. In front, on the left, a fireplace; to the left, in the background, a door to the inner apartments; to the right, back, a door into the front passage; in the foreground, on the right, a window. In the centre of back wall a wide opening between two columns, partly closed by an old Gobelins tapestry. On the right a sofa, table and chairs. On the left, in front of the fireplace, several low seats. Near the middle, placed diagonally, a writing-table with shelves; beside the table two seats with low backs and a comfortable arm-chair. Old portraits and coloured prints on the walls.*

HOLTZMANN *is seated at the back of the room, a portfolio on his lap.* CONRAD *ushers in* BARON LUDWIG.

CONRAD (*in the doorway*).

If your Excellency will kindly come this way—the doctor is with Madame von Kellinghausen.

BARON LUDWIG.

Ah? In that case perhaps I had better——

CONRAD.

Madame von Kellinghausen will be here in a moment, your Excellency. The other gentleman has already been announced. (*Indicating* HOLTZMANN.)

BARON LUDWIG.

Very well. (CONRAD *goes out.*)

HOLTZMANN (*rises and makes a deep bow*).

BARON LUDWIG.

(*Bowing slightly in return wanders about the room and at last pauses before* HOLTZMANN.) I beg your pardon—but surely I know your face.

HOLTZMANN.

Very likely, your Excellency. My name is Holtzmann, private secretary to Baron Richard von Völl lingk.

BARON LUDWIG.

Indeed? I am so seldom at my brother's. The fact is—er, well. Yesterday was election-day at Lengenfeld, by the way. The papers were full of it this morning. It seems to cause a good deal of surprise that Count Kellinghausen should not only have withdrawn in favour of my brother, but should actu-

ally have gone about canvassing for him. I daresay that's an exaggeration, though?

HOLTZMANN.

On the contrary, your Excellency. The Count has been down in the country electioneering for weeks.

BARON LUDWIG.

Really? And you were with him, I suppose?

HOLTZMANN (*with a dry smile*).

Very much so, your Excellency. I should be sorry to be answerable for all the nonsense I've had to talk and write!

BARON LUDWIG.

H'm—just so. Nonsense always wins. Who said that, by the way? Julian the Apostate, wasn't it?

HOLTZMANN.

No, your Excellency. Talbot.

BARON LUDWIG.

Julian might have said it. The losing side always philosophises.

HOLTZMANN.

I hope we sha'n't be on the losing side.

BARON LUDWIG.

H'm. What is your profession?

HOLTZMANN.

Theology, your Excellency.

BARON LUDWIG.

And how long do you think it will be before it lands you in socialism?

HOLTZMANN (*offended*).

Excellency!

BARON LUDWIG.

My dear sir, look at the examples! I remember a predecessor of yours at my brother's—a theological student also, I believe. Well, he landed with both feet in the middle of the Socialist camp.

HOLTZMANN.

Yes, I know, your Excellency. You mean Meixner.

BARON LUDWIG.

That reminds me—I hear the fellow has actually been taking a leading hand in the fight against my brother.

HOLTZMANN.

The report is true.

BARON LUDWIG.

Well, I hope you hit back hard.

HOLTZMANN.

That is what I was there for, your Excellency.

Enter BEATA *and* DR. KAHLENBERG.

BEATA.

I hadn't dared to hope that your Excellency would answer my summons so promptly.

BARON LUDWIG (*kissing her hand*).

My dear Countess, your summons was a command —and one I was only too happy to obey. (BEATA *turns to* HOLTZMANN.) Ah, good-morning, my dear doctor.

KAHLENBERG.

Good-morning, your Excellency. How is it you haven't been in lately to let me look you over? A guilty conscience, eh?

BARON LUDWIG.

Lack of time, doctor. Give me a day of twenty-five hours, and I'll devote one of them to consulting my physician.

KAHLENBERG.

Who will order you to rest during the other twenty-four.

BARON LUDWIG.

We all get that order sooner or later, doctor—and from a chief we have to obey. (*In a low voice.*) How is the Countess?

KAHLENBERG (*same tone*).

No worse. (*To* BEATA.) And now, my dear lady, I must be off—but what's the matter?

BEATA (*joyously excited, a paper in her hand*).

Oh, nothing—nothing—nothing——

KAHLENBERG (*in a tone of friendly reproach*).

You know I've warned you——

BEATA.

Not to feel, not to think, not to laugh, not to cry—not to live, in short, dear doctor!

KAHLENBERG.

Well, I don't object to the laughing.

BEATA.

It's just as well you don't, for it's a habit you couldn't break me of. There *is* so much to laugh at in this vale of tears! Well, good-bye, doctor! (KAHLENBERG *goes out.*)

BEATA (*to* BARON LUDWIG).

This will interest you too. Herr Holtzmann—you know Herr Holtzmann?—has just brought me the returns from Lengenfeld. Only fancy, your brother has a majority of a hundred and thirty-one! Think of that!

BARON LUDWIG.

Don't let us be too sanguine.

BEATA.

Oh——

HOLTZMANN.

Six districts are still to be heard from, Countess, and we know that four of these belong to the Socialists. It is still doubtful if we can gain a majority.

BEATA (*concealing her disappointment*).

And when do you expect to hear the final result?

HOLTZMANN.

At any moment now.

BEATA.

And when you *do* hear——

HOLTZMANN.

I will jump into a cab and bring you the news instantly.

BEATA.

Thank you so much. (*Gives him her hand.*) Is Baron Völkerlingk at home?

HOLTZMANN.

He went for a ride. I daresay I shall find him on my return.

BEATA.

Remember me to him, won't you? (HOLTZMANN *takes leave with a bow.*)

BARON LUDWIG.

What do you hear from Kellinghausen? He is still at Lengenfeld, I hear.

BEATA.

I have just had a letter. Now that the elections are over he means to take a day's shooting, and then he is coming home—free from his party-duties for the first time in years!

BARON LUDWIG.

And what does the Egeria of the party say to such a state of things?

BEATA.

Do you mean *me,* your Excellency?

BARON LUDWIG.

I mean the woman at whose delightful dinner-table the fate of more than one important bill has been decided. Now that Kellinghausen has retired into private life, do you mean to keep up the little political dinners we've always been so much afraid of?

BEATA.

I hope so, your Excellency. And if you care to beard the lion in his den, I shall be charmed to send you an invitation. You haven't dined with us in an age. I've always fancied that the estrangement between your brother and yourself might be the cause of our seeing so little of you.

BARON LUDWIG.

My dear Countess, those eyes of yours see through everything; and I read in them all the answers I might make to that question. Ah, well—Richard had the good luck, the unspeakable good luck, to win your friendship, and under your influence, to develop into the man he is!

BEATA.

I know how to listen when clever men are talking. That is the secret of what you call my influence.

BARON LUDWIG.

You think so?—Well—there was Richard, dabbling in poetry and politics, in archæology and explorations, like the typical noble amateur. He had a fortune from his mother, while I was poor. But in one respect I was richer than he; for he married a fool who dragged him down to the level of her own silly snobbishness. But then you came—and lifted

him up again. Then all his dormant powers awoke—he discovered his gift as a speaker, he became the mouthpiece of the party, he got into the Reichstag, and——

BEATA.

And dropped out again.

BARON LUDWIG.

Exactly. And the estrangement between us dates from that time. It was reported that government had left him in the lurch, and I was thought to be more or less responsible.

BEATA.

At all events, his career was cut short. And he failed again at the next election.

BARON LUDWIG.

And now your friendship has helped him to success.

BEATA.

My husband's friendship, you mean.

BARON LUDWIG.

In my loveless household I know too little of the power of woman to pronounce definitely on that point.

BEATA.

You do well to suspend your judgment.

BARON LUDWIG.

Ah, now you are displeased with me. I am sorry. I might be of use to you.

BEATA.

If you wish to be of use to me you can do so by becoming your brother's friend. It was to ask you this that I sent for you.

BARON LUDWIG.

Countess, I wonder at your faith in human nature!

BEATA.

Human nature has never deceived me.

BARON LUDWIG.

One would adore you for saying that if one hadn't so many other reasons for doing so!

BEATA (*laughing*).

Pretty speeches at our age?

BARON LUDWIG.

You may talk of *my* age, but not of yours.

BEATA.

Look at the grey hair—here, on my temples; and my medicine-bottles over there. I never stir without them now.

BARON LUDWIG.

I have been distressed to hear of your illness.

BEATA.

Yes, my heart bothers me—an old story. My heart is tired—and I—I'm not. And when I drive it too hard it grows a little restive now and then. But it doesn't matter! (*Enter* ELLEN.) Is that you, Ellen? Come in, dear.

ELLEN (*in skating dress*).

Mother, dear, I didn't know you had a visitor. How do you do, your Excellency?

BARON LUDWIG.

How do you do, young lady? Dear me—dear me —what have you been growing into?

ELLEN.

Into life, your Excellency!

BARON LUDWIG.

Ha—very good—very neat. So many people just grow past it.

BEATA.

And how was the skating, dear?

ELLEN.

Oh, heavenly. Norbert and I simply flew. Poor Miss Mansborough—we left her miles behind!

BEATA.

Well, run away now. Take off your fur jacket—you're too warm.

ELLEN.

Good-bye, your Excellency.

BARON LUDWIG.

Au revoir, little Countess. (ELLEN *goes out.*)

BARON LUDWIG.

What a little wonder you've made of her!

BEATA.

She *is* developing, isn't she?

BARON LUDWIG.

And my nephew Norbert—you have developed him too. A very comprehensive piece of work. (BEATA *laughs.*)

BARON LUDWIG.

If only he doesn't stray from the path you've marked out for him.

BEATA.

Ah—you are thinking of that pamphlet of his?

BARON LUDWIG (*nods*).

An attack on duelling, I understand? Well, it's no business of mine.

BEATA.

He is not as immature as you think.

BARON LUDWIG.

Indeed?

Enter CONRAD.

CONRAD (*announcing*).

Baron von Brachtmann, his Highness Prince Usingen.

BARON LUDWIG.

The pillars of the state! Brachtmann especially. This is something for me to remember, Countess.

Enter BRACHTMANN *and* PRINCE. CONRAD *goes out.*

BRACHTMANN.

My dear Countess——

BEATA.

I am so glad to see you. And you, Prince. Always faithful to the cause?

PRINCE.

Yes, Countess; as far as fidelity is consonant with perfect inactivity.—Glad to shake hands between two rounds, your Excellency.

BARON LUDWIG.

Our encounters are not sanguinary, your Highness.

PRINCE.

No—although one adversary occasionally *cuts* another. (*Laughter.*)

BRACHTMANN.

We ventured to call, Countess, because we fancied that Völkerlingk would keep you posted as to the news from Lengenfeld.

BEATA.

Baron Völkerlingk has done me no such honour. But—by the merest accident—his secretary was here just now. Here are the latest returns. (*Hands him the paper.*)

BRACHTMANN (*bending over the paper*).

H'm, h'm——

PRINCE.

Let me see.

BRACHTMANN.

Well, we'll hope for the best. Kellinghausen's personal popularity has secured a conservative majority till now; but now that he has withdrawn in favour of another man—even though that man is Völkerlingk—the result is more than doubtful.

BARON LUDWIG.

I confess, Countess, that even if Kellinghausen looked upon his politics merely as a branch of sport,

I don't quite understand his sacrificing his career to my brother.

BEATA.

My husband is very easy-going. He has no ambition. They had bothered him dreadfully at their committee-meetings about things he didn't understand—at least he said he didn't. The truth is, it probably bored him.

BRACHTMANN.

But how about his fanatical devotion to the party? If we are all monomaniacs on that subject, he is certainly the worst. He felt more keenly than any of us what the party lost in losing your brother (*to* BARON LUDWIG)—he realised our need of Völkerlingk's efficiency and energy. He saw what a great power was lying idle. Doesn't that explain his action?

BARON LUDWIG.

I needn't tell you, Herr von Brachtmann, how pleasant it is to hear my brother praised. I quite realise how much you need him at this particular moment—with the debate on the civil code pending, and the serious questions likely to come up in connection with it. (*To* BEATA.) But that Kellinghausen should have consented to withdraw, even in such an emergency— I have so often heard him say, Count-

ess, that it was the duty of a landed proprietor to represent the district in which his property lay. He said it was the only justification of a representative government.

BEATA.

But you know you all say that!

PRINCE.

My dear Countess, the revolutionary spirit has entered into our traditions, and the modern idea of making a revolution is to gird at existing institutions. Why deprive us of such an innocent amusement?

BARON LUDWIG.

Really, Prince—pardon me—but since, by birth and political affiliations, you are a supporter of existing institutions, would it not be well to speak of them less flippantly?

PRINCE.

Why, my dear Baron?—Countess, shall I show you the attitude of the modern state toward its citizens? Here we are: the state with its hand in its pocket, the citizen with his fist clenched. And the only way to unclench the citizen's fist is for the state to pull something out of its pocket. There's the situation in a nutshell. It's a matter of taste whether one respects such an institution or not.

BRACHTMANN.

You know, Baron, he is the spoiled child of the party.

PRINCE.

Its prodigal son, you mean. I squandered all my original ideas long ago, and am living on the husks of the feudal tradition. But we are boring Madame von Kellinghausen. (*The three men rise.*)

BEATA.

Good-bye, Prince—Herr von Brachtmann. (*To* BARON LUDWIG.) Whenever your solitude weighs on you, come in and let me give you a cup of tea.

BARON LUDWIG.

You are very good. But I am afraid it is too late to begin.

BEATA.

It is never too late to renew an old friendship.

BARON LUDWIG.

Thank you. (*Goes out with the two other men.*)

ELLEN *enters.*

ELLEN.

(*Throwing her arms about her mother's neck.*) Mother! You dear little mamma!

BEATA.

Well, madcap—what is it now?

ELLEN.

Oh, nothing, nothing. I'm so happy, that's all.

BEATA.

What are you happy about, dear?

ELLEN.

I don't know—does one ever?

BEATA.

Has anything in particular happened?

ELLEN.

No; nothing. That is—Norbert said— Oh, yes to be sure; we met Uncle Richard.

BEATA.

Ah—where?

ELLEN.

In the Zoo. On horseback. He sent his love and said he would be in before dinner. Norbert is coming too. Mother, is it true that Uncle Richard is such a wonderful speaker? Norbert says he can do what he likes with people.

BEATA.

Some people—but only those whose thoughts he can turn into feelings, or whose feelings he can turn into thoughts. Do you understand?

ELLEN.

Oh, yes! You mean, one can give only to those who have something to give in return?

BEATA.

Yes.

ELLEN.

But he must have great power—I am sure of it! He's always so quiet, and says so little—yet one feels there's a great fire inside—and sometimes it blazes up.

BEATA (*laughing*).

What do you know about it?

ELLEN.

Oh, I know. It's just the same with— Mother, how can people *bear* life sometimes? It's so beautiful one simply can't breathe!

BEATA (*with emotion*).

Yes, it *is* beautiful. And even when it's nothing but pain and fear and renunciation, even then it's still beautiful, Ellen.

ELLEN (*alarmed*).

Mother—what is the matter?

BEATA.

Nothing, dear. I'm only a little tired. (*She goes to the door.*)

CONRAD *enters.*

CONRAD.

Baron Norbert. (*Goes out.*)

NORBERT *enters.*

NORBERT.

How d'ye do, Aunt Beata? How are you to-day?

BEATA (*wearily*).

Very well, thanks.

ELLEN (*anxiously*).

No, not very well. (BEATA *signs her to be silent.*)

NORBERT.

This is Thursday. Ellen and I were to read *I Promessi Sposi* together; but if I might say a word to you first——

BEATA.

Presently, Norbert. Wait for me here.

ELLEN.

Don't you want me, mother?

BEATA.

No, dear. Stay with Norbert. I shall be back in a moment. (*She goes out.*)

ELLEN (*looking after her*).

Oh, Norbert!

NORBERT.

Is she really worse?

ELLEN.

No, she is just the same as usual. But at night—oh, Norbert, she's never in bed. All night she wanders, wanders. When I hear her coming, I lie quite still. If she knew I was awake she might not come any more. She never touches me, but just bends over and strokes my pillow, oh, so softly! And she breathes so hard, as if it hurt her—and then gradually she grows quiet again. When you see her in the daytime, so gay and dear and busy, so full of other people's pleasures, you'd never guess the misery she endures. Oh, Norbert, you *do* love her, don't you?

NORBERT.

I believe I love her better than my own mother.

ELLEN.

No, no, Norbert, that's wicked. You mustn't say that.

NORBERT.

Perhaps not, but I can't help feeling it. And why shouldn't I, after all? When I was a boy my father was everything to me—after that he was always travelling, and I was left to my own devices. There are so many things that puzzle a chap when there's no one to talk them over with. It's different with girls,

I suppose. At first I used to go to my mother: *she's* always found life simple enough. Visits, and parties, and church—she looks upon church-going as another kind of visiting—well, do you know what *she* said to me? "In the first place, my dear boy, your trousers are shocking. What you need is a good tailor. Then you ought to take up lawn tennis—and after that, we'll see." Well, that didn't help me much. And then your mother took pity on me. Again and again she's let me sit up half the night, talking things over with her.

ELLEN.

And now you and she have got something to say to each other again. What is it, Norbert? Do tell me! Why can't *I* help you as well as mother?

NORBERT.

Perhaps you'd like to do my examination papers for me?

ELLEN.

Nonsense; it's not that.—But you don't care for me any more.

NORBERT.

You silly child!

ELLEN.

You told me you did once—long ago—but since then—you've never once——

NORBERT.

Listen, dear. I made an awful ass of myself that day. Do you know what I did? I called on your father to ask his permission to marry you.

ELLEN.

And you never told me?

NORBERT.

Luckily your father was out—and as for your mother—well, she simply laughed at me!

ELLEN.

Oh!

NORBERT.

Oh, you know how your mother laughs at one. It doesn't hurt. "Dear boy," she said, in the kindest way, "it's too soon to talk of such things to Ellen. You must give her time to grow up." And I gave her my word I would; and you see I've kept it.

ELLEN.

And if mother should——

BEATA *enters.*

BEATA.

Ellen, dear, go to Miss Mansborough. It's time for your reading. Norbert will come in a moment.

ELLEN.

Yes, mother. (*Goes out.*)

BEATA (*who has been watching them closely*).

By the way, Norbert—what about that promise you made me?

NORBERT.

I've kept it, Aunt Beata.

BEATA.

Then you want to talk to me about something else?

NORBERT.

Yes. The storm-signals are up. My college club has turned on me: one, two, three, and out you go!

BEATA.

Not in disgrace?

NORBERT.

I'm not so sure. I got an official letter yesterday from the committee, asking me if I was the author of a pamphlet called "The Ordeal."

BEATA.

Why did you write it under an assumed name?

NORBERT.

Only on my father's account.

BEATA.

If you disguised yourself at all, you ought to have done so more thoroughly.

NORBERT.

Why, Aunt Beata! Haven't you often told me that every reformer must have the courage of his convictions?

BEATA.

Yes; but I've no sympathy with unnecessary martyrdom. Keep a cool head, dear boy, and don't be drawn into controversy just yet. Haven't I often told you that this college duelling you rail against is only a preparation for the real battle of life—the battle of ideas and beliefs? You'll come to that later—ask your father how it is!

NORBERT.

Oh, father—of course he's only interested in big things.

BEATA.

What does he say to your article?

NORBERT.

Immature.

BEATA.

Was he vexed?

NORBERT.

When I asked him if it annoyed him, he laughed and said:—"I know the world too well to agree with you. But you must work out the problem for yourself. I sha'n't interfere."

BEATA.

Well, what more do you want? Did you expect him to go into raptures?

NORBERT.

Wait and see, Aunt Beata! I mean to suffer for my convictions. I mean to brave persecution. Is that a laughing matter?

BEATA.

Come! Come! No bragging—not even about persecution. It's intoxicating at first, but the after-taste is bitter.

NORBERT.

Don't make fun of me, Aunt Beata.

BEATA.

Heaven forbid! You know *I* don't disapprove of your article.

NORBERT.

How could you? Isn't it all yours?

BEATA.

I don't understand anything about duelling.

NORBERT.

No, but my ideas are yours—every one of them. All I've said about self-restraint — about striving toward an harmonious whole—about the Greek ideal of freedom—and how posterity will smile at our struggles—it's all yours, Aunt Beata, every word of it.

BEATA.

Don't tell your father! And besides, it isn't. My ideas have got twisted in that wild young brain of yours. And it might annoy him to think that I had put them there——

NORBERT.

Oh, Aunt Beata, *I* know what you really think. But, of course, if you don't want me to, I——

Enter CONRAD.

CONRAD (*announcing*).

Baron Völkerlingk.

Enter RICHARD. CONRAD *goes out.*

RICHARD.

Well, dear friend? What sort of a night have you had? Not good, I'm afraid.

BEATA.

There's no use in trying to deceive you. Have you just come from your own house?

RICHARD.

Yes.

BEATA.

Well? Telegrams?

RICHARD.

None for the last two hours. Well, Norbert, you here, as usual? (*To* BEATA.) So you have the younger generation on your hands too?

BEATA (*laughing*).

So much the better, since the older shows itself so seldom nowadays.

RICHARD.

Ah, well——

BEATA.

Good-bye, Norbert dear.

NORBERT (*kissing* BEATA's *hand*).

Good-bye, father. (RICHARD *nods to him.* NORBERT *goes out.*)

BEATA.

Will you dine with me to-day, Richard? (RICHARD *shakes his head.*)

BEATA.

Just we two?

RICHARD.

I can't: my wife has a dinner: an ambassador and his wife, two lights of the Church, and others of the same feather. I must show myself on such occasions, to keep up appearances.

BEATA.

I'm sorry. I should have liked to have you with me—to-day. How do you stand the suspense? Perhaps I don't show it—but I'm in a fever.

RICHARD.

It's telling on me too. The fact is, any poor devil of a mountebank is a king compared to one of us. He does his trick and gets his pay.—Oh, this last fortnight! If you'd seen me driven about from village to village like a travelling quack! Freedom and hot words, free beer and hot sausages! And, to cap the climax, a fellow who used to be my private secretary leading the campaign against me! Bah—it was horrible. As for Michael, with his Olympian calm, he saw only the humorous side of it. (*Laughing.*)

BEATA.

I wonder he let you leave before the election.

RICHARD.

He thought I ought not to make myself too cheap. I quite agreed with him, and took myself off. Hang the democracy!

BEATA.

If only the noblemen who want to rule could get on without it!

RICHARD.

They could, if the spirit of the age hadn't turned them into demagogues.

BEATA.

Did Holtzmann do as well as you expected?

RICHARD.

Admirably. But he's been going about with such a long face lately that he's rather got on my nerves. —I heard you had told him to come back when the returns are in—may I wait for him here?—When one thinks that something will come in at that door presently—something dressed like Holtzmann, looking like Holtzmann—and that that something will be Fate—nothing more or less than Fate!

BEATA.

And if he comes in and says—or rather, if he doesn't say anything? Remember, Richard, even if *that* happens, you've got to go on living!

RICHARD.

Of course. Why not? It's all in the day's work. An Indian penitent was once asked: "Why do you go on living?" And his answer was: "Because I am dead."—Oh, I don't mean to be ungrateful. As long as I have you, dear—as long as you are here to live my life with me, to give it colour and meaning and purpose—let come what may, nothing else matters.

BEATA.

Don't say that—don't——

RICHARD.

Am I exaggerating? Why, ever since we— How long ago is it that we met for the first time, in the wood at Tarasp? Fifteen years?

BEATA.

It seems like yesterday.

RICHARD.

You passed between the dark pine-trunks like an apparition. You wore a pink dress and had Ellen by the hand.

BEATA.

She was tired and had begun to cry.

RICHARD.

I saw that she wanted to be carried.

BEATA.

And I was just recovering from an illness, and was too weak to lift her. You raised your hat—no, it was the white cap you wore——

RICHARD.

Do you remember that?

BEATA.

Good heavens, what was I then, and what have you made of me? My own—let me call you that just once, Richard, as I used to do—just once, on this great day—my own! (RICHARD *looks nervously toward the door.*)

BEATA.

There is no one coming.

RICHARD.

Let you!

BEATA.

What a quiet happy little woman I was! That "happy" is not meant as a reproach, dearest! I have a boundless capacity for happiness, and it kept me company even in the loneliness of my early married life—for in those days Michael didn't take much notice of me. It was *you* who showed him that I was worth noticing. And so you built up my new life—a hard life to carry, at times, a life bowed

under its own wealth as the vine is bowed under its fruit—but how it has grown under your hand, dearest, how it has spread and strengthened!—Now you're laughing at me, Richard.

RICHARD.

Beata—no one knows as you do how I have blundered and struggled. What are you trying to do? Do you want to give me more faith in myself, or do you really think I've done all that for you?

BEATA.

I know every line in your forehead, I watch every look in your eye, I read every thought in your soul—there are some I could wish away, for they only make you miserable—but no one knows as I do what you are, and what you have been to me!

RICHARD.

When will Michael be here?

BEATA.

How suddenly you ask that! You are tormenting yourself again. Dear—dearest—don't look like that! Why, it never really happened—it's been dead and buried for years—dead and buried, every trace of it. No one knows what we were to each other, no one even dreams it. And we're old people now—you

and I. Only think, I shall soon be forty! Who is going to ask two old mummies what follies they committed in the year one?

RICHARD.

You are pretending not to care, Beata. Don't do that!

BEATA.

Don't weigh every word I say—just look into my wicked heart. Your conscience has nothing to do with that! And if you're fond of Michael—if we're both fond of him—and why shouldn't we both be fond of him—that dear, good, cheery Michael of ours?—why, that needn't make you probe the depths of your soul for fresh wickedness. I tell you we've paid for everything, even to the uttermost farthing!

RICHARD.

Do you think so? It seems to me that when a man and a woman have found everything in each other, as we have, when they have been to each other the strength and the meaning and the object of life —when they've resolved to die fighting back to back, together to the last, as you used to say—it seems to me that in such a case there isn't much room for expiation. If Purgatory is like that it must be fairly habitable. (BEATA *laughs.*) Ah, now you are flippant.

BEATA.

Be thankful that one of us is, dear!

RICHARD.

I remember when I lost my seat, six years ago—it was a hard knock, I can tell you—everything went under at once—well, I said to myself: This is my punishment. And the idea never left me. While I was wandering about the world, or vegetating down in the country, I actually used to get a kind of comfort out of it. And now? Do you know, I sometimes fancy you wouldn't be altogether sorry if I lost my election again.

BEATA (*laughingly*).

Really? Do you think that?

RICHARD.

In fact I'm not at all sure you hold with the party any longer.

BEATA.

What—I, its Egeria? An elderly party-nymph gone wrong? What a shocking idea!

RICHARD.

I'm sure of one thing—you enjoy looking over our heads.

BEATA.

Don't say *our* heads—don't include yourself with the rest. You think of your duty; they think of

their rights. You use the masses in order to serve them. The others think only of power.

RICHARD.

Oh, as to that—we all want power.

BEATA.

Yes: the question is, for whose benefit?—Ah, well, I see I shall have to tell you—you ought to know—the sooner the better, I suppose!

RICHARD.

Tell me what?

BEATA.

Dear—did you really think it was Michael's fondest wish to resign his seat in Parliament, and live only for his horses?

RICHARD.

I've heard him say so often enough.

BEATA.

And so you leaped into the breach—in the interests of the party?

RICHARD (*hesitating*).

And because — (*suddenly*) Beata — there's been some deception? (BEATA *nods.*) Some one has been working against me——?

BEATA.

Or for you—as you please.—Sit down beside me, dear; give me both your hands—so! And now listen. I couldn't bear to see your disappointment—your suffering—I suffered with you too intensely! And so—don't look so startled, or I shall lose heart and be afraid to go on.—How shall I tell you?—It's taken me a year—a whole year's work. By degrees I persuaded him that he was unsuited to Parliamentary life—gradually I turned him against the pottering routine-work which is the only thing he can do—little by little I made him see what a boon it would be for the country and the party if he would only let you take his place. Till at last he did——

RICHARD (*rising*).

Ah——

BEATA.

Can you say *now* that I didn't want you elected? (RICHARD *is silent.*) I should never have told you this if I hadn't known that his pride in his heroic feat would make him betray himself sooner or later. (*A pause.*) After all, think how little he's given up! To him it was only a—pastime—to you it is life. I had no choice, had I? You do see that, don't you? (*A pause.*) Richard, I may be a very wicked woman, but at least I deserve one look from you!

RICHARD.

Beata!—Beata! What can I say? What can I say? You know how I've always tried to keep our feeling for each other within the bounds—the bounds of— You know how it was twelve years ago—when I found myself gradually slipping into intimacy with him, I came to you and said: "Either this thing ends here, or I tell him everything. I won't take his hand and play the sneak. If I do, we shall lose our respect for each other as well as our self-respect." And then we hit on this friendship as a way out of it—a way of not losing each other altogether. It wasn't a very honourable solution—but this—this new sacrifice — if I accept this — God! If Holtzmann were to come in now and tell me the other man has won, what a load he would take off my mind!

BEATA.

Richard—how can you?

RICHARD.

Think of it: To-morrow I shall have to make that speech. My position, my convictions, compel me to appear as the spokesman of the highest ideals—and all the while I shall owe my seat to the friend whose holiest ties I have trampled on——

BEATA.

And if they were *not* the holiest——?

RICHARD (*startled*).

Beata!

BEATA.

Don't turn from me. I've loved you so long!

RICHARD (*clasps her hands*).

One thing more. Listen to me. You played too reckless a game. Such things are avenged. No one knows what happened in the past. Twelve years have covered it; but it's ill disturbing the dead. Such things are avenged. Remember that.

BEATA.

Well—and what of it?

RICHARD.

What of it?

BEATA.

I shouldn't care—except for Norbert and Ellen. For I mean them to have all the happiness we have missed. Nothing must ever come between— Hush! That is Holtzmann's voice. (*She presses her left hand to her heart.*) Quite steady. (*She holds out her right hand to* RICHARD.) Feel my pulse—it's perfectly steady.

CONRAD *enters.*

CONRAD.

Herr Holtzmann——

Enter HOLTZMANN. CONRAD *goes out.*

HOLTZMANN (*bowing quietly*).

We have a majority of twenty votes, Baron. Here are the final returns. (*Hands telegram to* RICHARD.)

RICHARD.

Official?

HOLTZMANN.

Virtually. As your co-worker, Baron, allow me to offer my congratulations. (RICHARD *turns away without speaking.*)

BEATA.

You see how overcome he is, dear Herr Holtzmann. Thank you with all my heart. (*Gives him her hand.*)

HOLTZMANN (*turning to leave the room*).

Good-afternoon, Countess.

RICHARD.

Holtzmann! (HOLTZMANN *pauses.*) You've fought a good fight.

HOLTZMANN.

Oh, as to that——

RICHARD.

Thank you. (*Shakes his hand.*)

HOLTZMANN.

Don't mention it. I did my duty, that's all. (*Bows and goes out.*)

BEATA.

Richard!—Isn't the struggle over yet?

RICHARD.

Beata—you have made me believe—in spite of myself—that—even now—I may be of use to the cause. I shall stick to my work, and try not to think.

BEATA.

It may not be as hard as you imagine.

RICHARD.

Perhaps not. But when the blow falls—if it falls——

BEATA.

We'll laugh——

RICHARD.

And meanwhile——

BEATA.

We'll live! (*They clasp each other's hands.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

ACT II

The same scenery as in the first act. The drawing-room is brightly lit, the curtain in the opening at back of stage drawn back, showing two other apartments, also brilliantly lit. In the nearest one a group of gentlemen are at the billiard-table. In the third room the rest of the guests have just left the table. For some minutes BEATA *is seen among them.* BRACHTMANN, PRINCE USINGEN *and* VON BERKELWITZ-GRÜNHOF *are just coming out of the billiard-room, talking together.*

BRACHTMANN.

(*Coming forward with* USINGEN.) Prince, I want a word with you later—an important matter.

PRINCE.

And I want a word with you.

BRACHTMANN.

On the same subject, probably.

PRINCE.

Perhaps.

VON BERKELWITZ (*looking about him*).

Deuced fine—magnificent! You've got to come up to town to see this kind of thing.

BRACHTMANN.

How is it we never see you in the Reichstag nowadays, my dear fellow?

VON BERKELWITZ.

What's a man to do? I'm a country squire—I've got to work—and besides I'm too poor to live in town. A man has got to make a show here—keep up appearances—I—hang it, that champagne's gone to my head—what was I going to say? Oh, yes: well, you see, I've got four boys growing up; one is in the Rathenow Hussars—crack regiment, you know—I always look out for that sort of thing—but costs like the devil! The second is with the Pacific squadron on board the Princess William. *He* doesn't cost as much except when he's ashore. The third is to study forestry, and just now he's with his rifle-corps. The fourth is at college—Bonn—belongs to all the most expensive clubs—but smart, deuced smart! That's the chief thing. I expect all four to make their living out of the state, but meanwhile they're a confounded expense to me. You've no idea what it costs to keep Oscar alone in white gloves!

PRINCE (*to* BRACHTMANN).

And these are the sources of German statesmanship!

VON BERKELWITZ.

What did you say, Prince?

PRINCE.

Nothing, nothing.

VON BERKELWITZ.

Not that we can't give you as good a dinner as you'll get here. But as to keeping up a country-seat and a town house and a shooting-box and a racing-stable—why, it's out of the question. I've had to mortgage my place—and the men's wages—coming round every Saturday! well—well—I tell my boys — rich marriages — *that's* the cure. And they *ought* to, by gad! Good-looking fellows, you understand. What the deuce are we Prussian noblemen for, if the state doesn't provide for us? Just answer me that!

PRINCE (*who has been studying the pictures*).

You ought to ask the Socialists that, Herr von Berkelwitz—ask it in the Reichstag, you know. It would be rather effective. (*Turns back to the pictures.*) A capital Sustermans.

BRACHTMANN (*smiling*).

After all, we're all looking out for ourselves.

VON BERKELWITZ.

And how have we succeeded? What have we landed proprietors accomplished? Oh, we can all talk loud enough; but when it comes to action, there we stand with our hands in our pockets.

PRINCE.

(*Who is turning over photograph-albums on the table.*) Other people's pockets.

BRACHTMANN (*laughing*).

Prince—Prince!

VON BERKELWITZ.

(*In a low tone, to* BRACHTMANN.) I say, is that fellow making fun of us?

BRACHTMANN.

He's ten times more of a Conservative than either of us.

VON BERKELWITZ.

He talks like a Radical.

PRINCE (*in a startled tone*).

Oh, the devil!

BRACHTMANN.

What's the matter?

PRINCE.

Isn't this the Countess's writing-table?

BRACHTMANN.

Yes.

PRINCE.

Come here a moment, will you, and just glance discreetly over these papers. Do you notice anything? (BRACHTMANN *shrugs his shoulders.*) I mean among the newspapers.

BRACHTMANN (*in a low voice, much agitated*).

The devil!—That was what I wanted to speak to you about. (*He points to one of the papers.*)

PRINCE.

Ah—they've sent you one too?

BRACHTMANN.

In the same wrapper, addressed in the same hand. An hour ago, just as I left the house. I suppose they haven't had time to look at the last post here.

PRINCE.

(*Taking up the paper and looking at the wrapper.*) Do you know, I've half a mind——

BRACHTMANN.

No, no, Prince—can't be done.

PRINCE.

I know it can't, my dear Baron. That's the very reason.—Don't our political opponents say that property is theft? Why not reverse the axiom, and——

VON BERKELWITZ.

What the deuce——?

PRINCE.

Why, instead of putting our hands into other people's pockets, we might put other people's property into ours.

BRACHTMANN.

Prince, we all know your way——

VON BERKELWITZ.

If your Highness has made yourself sufficiently witty at our expense, perhaps you'll explain what this is? (*Pointing to the paper.*)

PRINCE.

This, my dear Herr von Berkelwitz, is a copy of the "Lengenfeld News," the Socialist organ——

VON BERKELWITZ.

Faugh! How can you touch it?

PRINCE.

Well, it touches *us*, and rather nearly, as you'll see.

VON BERKELWITZ

Why, what's up?

PRINCE.

(*Taking a newspaper out of his pocket.*) Look here——

VON BERKELWITZ.

That's the same as the other?

PRINCE.

Precisely. I brought it with me on your account. You will find in it an interesting report of a meeting of Socialist electors. Do me the favour to read the passage which they have thoughtfully marked for our benefit.

VON BERKELWITZ (*reading*).

"It is seldom that the honourable gentlemen of the Right, the self-constituted guardians of public morality, give us an opportunity to see what goes on behind the scenes, in the gilded saloons to which the man in the street may not presume to penetrate"—confound their insolence!—"it is not often that we get a hint of what goes on behind their silken bed-curtains"—h'm, I wish they could see what I sleep on!

PRINCE.

Go on.

VON BERKELWITZ (*reading*).

"But now and then a happy accident yields us an edifying glimpse of their private histories. And, if I might venture to speak openly, I could give you such a glimpse into the private life of the honourable member from Lengenfeld, and into his relations with the friend whose seat in the Reichstag he has taken—the confiding friend who, instead of keeping watch in his own house, has been travelling from place to place, canvassing for the honourable member. (Laughter. Prolonged cheering.)" Lengenfeld? Lengen—why, that is Völkerlingk's district. (BRACHTMANN *nods affirmatively.*)

VON BERKELWITZ.

And the friend—the friend who——? (*He breaks off, and points vaguely to the room.* BRACHTMANN *nods again.*) The deuce!

BRACHTMANN.

On account of the party I suppose we shall have to take some notice of this.

PRINCE.

Kellinghausen evidently doesn't know of it yet. But Völkerlingk does. I watched him.

BRACHTMANN.

The Countess is not well. Who is the proper person to take that paper away before she sees it?

PRINCE (*smiling*).

Well, frankly, I should say Völkerlingk——

BRACHTMANN.

You don't mean——

PRINCE (*still smiling*).

I don't mean anything.

VON BERKELWITZ.

Gentlemen, I'm only a plain country squire, but I should like to suggest that the morals of our hostess are hardly a subject for discussion.

PRINCE.

Morals? Morals? What do morals signify? They were only invented for the preservation of the race.

VON BERKELWITZ.

That's over my head, your Highness.

PRINCE.

It's simple enough. Mankind is bound to go on reproducing itself—that's its fundamental instinct. Morality was invented to keep the strain pure. If it ceases to accomplish that purpose, it had better abdicate in favour of immorality. That's all.

VON BERKELWITZ.

I'll be hanged if I understand a single word.

PRINCE.

We all know the old families wouldn't have survived till now if the stock hadn't been renewed—surreptitiously, so to speak—by——

BRACHTMANN.

Really, Prince—really——

PRINCE.

My dear Brachtmann, it's all very well for you to look shocked. *Your* family hasn't had to resort to such expedients: your patent of nobility isn't more than two hundred years old. But my people have been misbehaving since the time of Lewis the Pious. Look at the result—look at *me*. Jaw prognathous—frontal bone asymmetrical—ears abnormal—all the symptoms of a decaying race. Thanks to several centuries of inbreeding, I must go through life a degenerate, and I assure you I haven't any talent for it. If only I could marry a healthy dairy-maid! Under such circumstances, do you wonder one loses one's respect for morality? What if two people in this house have followed the dictates of their temperament?

BRACHTMANN.

Prince, von Berkelwitz is right. As long as we're in the house ourselves, we'll postpone any discussion of its inmates.

PRINCE.

As you please. (RICHARD VÖLKERLINGK *is seen approaching. The* PRINCE *glances toward him.*) Which won't prevent my feeling the sincerest sympathy for our friend there. His phenomenal self-possession is enough to confirm my suspicions.

Enter RICHARD.

RICHARD.

I've been looking for you everywhere, Brachtmann. I want to shake hands and tell you how glad I am to be under your orders again.

BRACHTMANN.

We won't talk of being under my orders, my dear Völkerlingk. You know how badly we need you, and how anxious we are to have you take the lead in the coming debate. (RICHARD *bows.*) I suppose we may count on your speaking on the Divorce Bill next Friday?

RICHARD (*hesitating*).

Why—I had hardly expected——

BRACHTMANN.

It's the very thing we want of you. According to the Socialists, a man and his wife are no more bound to each other than a pair of cuckoos. We need a speaker of your eloquence and your convictions to proclaim the sanctity of the marriage-bond.

RICHARD.

But I hardly know if I should have time to get my facts together. And besides— (*He draws* BRACHTMANN *aside and continues in a low tone.*) An hour or two ago I received a copy of a speech that a fellow called Meixner has been making against me. The man is a former secretary of mine, turned Socialist——

BRACHTMANN.

Ah—Meixner was your secretary?

RICHARD.

You knew of this?

BRACHTMANN.

My dear Völkerlingk, don't you see that after such an attack it's doubly important that you should speak on this very question? As for the party, I think I may say in its name that our asking you to do so is equivalent to a vote of confidence.

RICHARD.

Thanks, Brachtmann. I believe you're right. My refusal might be misinterpreted.

BRACHTMANN (*turning toward the others*).

We were speaking of this when you joined us. We have all received copies of the paper.

RICHARD (*to the group*).

Then I must apologise for not having mentioned the matter; but I was waiting to bring it before you in committee. It seems to be a question of personal spite, for my son has received the paper too.

BRACHTMANN.

And Madame von Völkerlingk?

RICHARD.

My wife? Why do you ask?

BRACHTMANN.

Look at this. (*Leads* RICHARD *to the writing-table and points to the paper.* RICHARD *starts, but controls himself instantly.*)

PRINCE.

We were just wondering how we could get rid of the thing before it is discovered, and we had reluctantly decided that none of us is sufficiently intimate here to tamper with the Countess's papers. Now, if *you,* my dear Baron—as an old friend of the family —knowing how important it is to spare her any excitement——

RICHARD (*looking at him sharply*).

There is only one person entitled to remove that paper, and that is Count Kellinghausen. I will speak to him at once.

PRINCE (*aside*).

Irreproachable!

BRACHTMANN.

My dear Völkerlingk, for heaven's sake leave Kellinghausen out of the question!

RICHARD.

How can I?

BRACHTMANN.

I have been in politics long enough to take such incidents philosophically. But Kellinghausen, easy-going as he is, strikes me as the kind of man who might make an ass of himself in such an emergency. If he loses his head he may do the party an incalculable amount of harm; whereas, if we can keep this thing from him, it will blow over in a week, and nobody be any the worse for it.

RICHARD.

But you forget that I am as much involved in this as Kellinghausen. It is impossible that I should stand aside and allow any reflection to be cast on —er——

BRACHTMANN.

You are quite right. But wait a moment. You said you meant to bring the matter up in committee, which is undoubtedly the proper way of dealing with

it. The committee meets the day after to-morrow; and all I ask is that you should say nothing till then.

RICHARD.

And suppose I agree to that—what becomes of this paper? (*Pointing to the writing-table.*) What if the Countess finds it?

VON BERKELWITZ.

Gentlemen, I'm only a plain country squire, and I haven't your refinements of conscience. (*He takes the paper, tears it up and throws it into the waste-paper basket.* BRACHTMANN *and the* PRINCE *laugh.*)

VON BERKELWITZ.

After which act of felony I suppose I had better make my escape. (*Shakes hands with the others and goes out.*)

BRACHTMANN.

Then it's understood that, in the interests of the party, you will——

PRINCE.

'Sh. Here is our host.

KELLINGHAUSEN *enters.*

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Ah, there you are, Richard! My dear fellow, I've been hunting for you high and low. I was actually

reduced to asking Madame von Völkerlingk where you were. "My dear Count," she said, "it's fifteen years since I've known where my husband was." Nice reputation you've got! Well, now I've run you to earth, sit down and let's have a talk. (*To the others.*) I haven't had a chance to say two words to him yet.

PRINCE.

My dear Brachtmann, shall we——?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

No, no; don't run off. Richard and I have no secrets. Let us take possession of this quiet corner. (*To* CONRAD, *who is passing with a tray of refreshments.*) Conrad, what have you got there? Lion brew from the wood, eh?

CONRAD.

Yes, your Excellency.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

That's what we always had at Bismarck's. H'm —in those days there was a power in the land. It weighed on us rather heavily at times, but we were none the worse for it. Your health, Richard, my dear fellow! Gentlemen, your healths! How deuced quiet you all are! You look as if I'd invited you to my own funeral. Good Lord, if you knew how glad

I am to have got the Reichstag off my shoulders!—The other day, down at the polls, I said to one of our Lengenfeld peasants: "My dear friend—" (they're all our dear friends at election-time; we even have to put up with being *their* dear friends). "My dear friend," said I, "I hope you're going to vote for my successor?"—"What will he give me for it?" says he. "What will the Socialist give you?" said I. "The Socialist will call you all names, and I like to hear you called names. It makes me laugh," the fellow answered. And he was right. We must amuse the masses and they'll love us. Circus-riding, my dear friends—that's all the nobility are good for!

BRACHTMANN.

We shall miss your cheerful view of life, my dear Kellinghausen.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

H'm—that's about the only epitaph I can hope for. Ha! ha!—Well—I say, Richard, what sort of a fellow is that Meixner? (*The others look up quickly.*) Wasn't he your secretary at one time?

RICHARD.

Yes.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

How long ago?

RICHARD.

It must be ten or twelve years.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Well, he has certainly profited by the training you gave him. He's raving against you like a madman.

RICHARD.

Did you happen to run across him?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Heaven forbid!

RICHARD.

Did you hear what he said?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Yes; Holtzmann told me about him. And I've had a lot of his speeches and proclamations sent to me. Capital stuff for lighting the fire. Well, thank the Lord, it's all over.

RICHARD.

I wish I knew how to thank you, Michael——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Nonsense. None of that. By the way, I picked up a pamphlet in the train to-day—"The Ordeal" or some such name. Holtzmann tells me that Norbert wrote it. Is that true? (RICHARD *nods.*)

BRACHTMANN.

Ah, indeed—your son wrote——?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I say, Richard, you give him a long rein, don't you?

RICHARD.

My dear Michael, the chief thing I have to thank my father for is that he gave *me* one. I vowed long ago that Norbert should have as much freedom as I had.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Well, we shall have to take the young scamp in hand before long.

RICHARD.

I wish you would. I should like to know who has put him up to this. He won't tell me.

Enter BEATA, *with* BARON LUDWIG VON VÖLKERLINGK.

BEATA.

May we join you? Don't let us break up your party.

BARON LUDWIG.

(*Advancing toward the other men.*) Will you allow me——?

BEATA (*to* MICHAEL, *in a low tone*).

Well, are you enjoying yourself?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Immensely, dear, immensely.

BEATA.

Did you like the way I arranged the seats at table?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Couldn't have been better. The brothers not too close together, yet near enough to talk. Now you must follow it up, and get them to make friends—eh?

BEATA.

That is what I've come for. (*To* RICHARD.) My dear Völkerlingk, I want to speak to you.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

(*To* RICHARD, *as he approaches.*) Mind you obey orders, now! (*Joins the others.*)

RICHARD.

I am glad you are not too tired, Beata.

BEATA.

I've been growing stronger every day since the elections. But you must take some notice of Leonie, Richard. She is saying things.

RICHARD.

Let her. It's her specialty.

BEATA.

Every one knows that she never comes here, and her being here to-night is making people talk.

BARON LUDWIG.

(*Approaching his brother, evidently at* KELLINGHAUSEN'S *instigation.*) Ah, here are the two friends talking together.

BEATA.

(*Looking from one brother to the other.*) And the two enemies, too—thank heaven!

BARON LUDWIG.

The Countess is right, Richard. It was foolish of us not to speak to each other.

RICHARD.

My dear Ludwig, perhaps we hadn't enough to say.

BARON LUDWIG.

Or too much!

RICHARD.

Possibly. (*To* BEATA.) But, Countess——

BEATA (*turning to join the others*).

No, no. I am going to leave you two together. (*She moves away.*)

RICHARD.

Why do you look at her so strangely?

BARON LUDWIG.

Strangely? What do you mean?

RICHARD.

You begrudge me this friendship, Ludwig.

BARON LUDWIG.

Do I? Perhaps. You must remmber that I am very lonely. I had hoped that your house might——

RICHARD.

My house? With Leonie——?

BARON LUDWIG.

Yes—your friend is different from Leonie.

RICHARD.

You needn't envy me, Ludwig. My friend is a dying woman. Every day I ask myself if I shall ever see her again.

BARON LUDWIG.

My dear Richard, the woman lives in a thousand energies. She will survive us both.

RICHARD.

God grant it!

BARON LUDWIG.

But—be on your guard.

RICHARD.

What do you mean?

BARON LUDWIG.

(*Glancing at* KELLINGHAUSEN.) Can we find a quiet corner somewhere? (*He takes* RICHARD'S *arm and they go toward the other room.*)

Enter LEONIE, *on* NORBERT'S *arm.*

LEONIE (*meeting the brothers*).

What a touching spectacle! Look, Norbert!

BARON LUDWIG.

Don't detain us, Leonie. We're going to have our photograph taken. (*He and* RICHARD *go out.*)

LEONIE (*advancing toward the front*).

How enchanting! And Beata as the angel of peace! Quite a new rôle for you, isn't it, dear? But you're *so* versatile!

BEATA.

Dear Leonie, find fault with me when I sow discord, but praise me when I make peace.

LEONIE.

Do you care so much for praise?

BEATA.

Don't you?

LEONIE.

Oh, no one ever praises me. I suppose I don't know how to play my cards. Norbert, please have the carriage called.

NORBERT.

Very well, mother. (*Goes out.*)

LEONIE.

Ah, Prince—good-evening! (*He kisses her hand.*) How is it we never see you at our missionary meetings? Her Royal Highness wished me to say that she counts on your help. Isn't that flattering? (*To the others.*) The Prince is one of us, you know. He serves the cause of religion faithfully——

PRINCE.

And in poverty of spirit. That's my special merit, you know, Baroness.

BRACHTMANN (*aside to the* PRINCE).

You reprobate!

LEONIE.

But pray don't let me disturb you, for I must really be off. My carriage is waiting, and my coachman is so cross. We're all the slaves of our carriages. (*To* KELLINGHAUSEN.) 'It has been so delightful—dear Beata is such a wonderful hostess. Our great stateswoman knows so well how to keep

her party in hand. Willingly or unwillingly, she makes them all come into line; don't you, Beata, dear?

BEATA.

I'm afraid you are among the unwilling to-night, Leonie.

LEONIE.

Oh, I'm not as adaptable as some of your friends.

BRACHTMANN (*aside to the* PRINCE).

Do you hear those amenities?

PRINCE (*to* BRACHTMANN).

The Baroness is dispensing Christian charity sprinkled with arsenic. Let's efface ourselves. (*They move quietly into the background.*)

LEONIE.

(*To* KELLINGHAUSEN, *with whom she has been talking.*) No, no, my dear Count—you mustn't think of it. Norbert will put me in my carriage. And meanwhile, I want to have a little chat with dear Beata. We always have so many things to say to each other.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*kissing her hand*).

At your orders, my dear friend. I'll draw the curtain to protect your *tête-à-tête.* (*He draws the curtain between the columns and goes out.*)

LEONIE.

How wonderfully well you look to-night, Beata! Not in the least like a prospective grandmother.

BEATA.

Why, as to that, Leonie, it looks as though you and I were to be made grandmothers on the same day.

LEONIE.

Ah, really? Well, Ellen is a delightful child. Where is she, by the way? You don't seem to care to let her be seen in your neighbourhood on such occasions.

BEATA.

Seen? In my neighbourhood? You have an odd way of putting things. But I believe you had something to say to me.

LEONIE.

I know I oughtn't to keep you from your other guests, but it's such a pleasure to have you to myself.—I wonder what has become of Norbert?—I must say, Beata, I can't help admiring your self-possession. I don't see how you can be so unconcerned.

BEATA.

What should I be concerned about?

LEONIE.

Why, you don't mean—? I should almost think you— But I don't know how to express myself. It's so very painful.—There are such dreadful people in the world.

BEATA.

Are there?

LEONIE.

This former secretary of Richard's, for instance, who has made such a shocking speech against him. You've received a copy, of course?

BEATA.

Not that I know of.

LEONIE (*drawing a paper from her pocket*).

Ah—I brought mine with me. Perhaps it might interest you.

BEATA.

Not in the least, my dear.

LEONIE.

You are mentioned in it, too.

BEATA (*smiling*).

Really?

LEONIE.

Only between the lines, of course.

BEATA.

Between the lines? What do you mean?

LEONIE.

This is the paragraph; the one marked with a blue pencil. Don't be horrified. It will make you laugh, of course. I laughed over it myself. (BEATA *takes the paper, looking firmly at* LEONIE *as she does so. She reads the paper, throws it aside, and looks at* LEONIE *again, without speaking.*) Good heavens, how pale you are! I didn't realise— Shall I get you a glass of water?

BEATA.

No, thanks. (*Controlling herself with an effort.*) Does Richard know of this?

LEONIE.

Oh, yes. Doesn't Michael?

BEATA.

Certainly not.—He would have— Will you let me have this paper?

LEONIE.

To show Michael?

BEATA.

Naturally. In a matter involving his honour——

LEONIE.

You don't mean to make a scandal?

BEATA.

What do you call a scandal? Haven't you made one in bringing me this?

LEONIE.

I mean that your husband might——

BEATA.

My husband will do as he sees fit.

LEONIE.

You are very sure of yourself.

BEATA.

My dear Leonie, remember that you are in my house.

LEONIE.

My dear Beata, we are always in each other's houses; we can't meet at the street corners, like servants.

BEATA.

You are right. Say what you were going to say.

LEONIE.

Oh, I have held my tongue so long!

BEATA.

Why have you, if you had anything to say?

LEONIE.

Listen, Beata. I am not going to discuss the relations between my husband and yourself. It's a subject that no longer interests me. But it was you who took him away from me, and when I found you had taken him, I turned to my boy instead. Then you took him too. Now I have nothing left—nothing but my position in society, which I have built up slowly, year by year, by my own efforts, as you know. I am in the Princess Agnes's most intimate set, I am patroness of—but all this doesn't interest you. But how have I accomplished it? Simply by keeping my eyes shut and appearing to sanction your friendship with Richard.—And now, if you persist in dragging your husband in, there will be a scandal, and I shall have to sue for a divorce; and that will be excessively unpleasant for us all. Don't you agree with me?

BEATA.

I might say so many things in reply.—In the first place, whatever I have taken was never really yours. —But no matter. I will only ask you one thing: have you thought of Ellen and Norbert?

LEONIE.

Oh, Ellen and Norbert! I've no objection to the match, none whatever—but it's *your* scheme, not mine,

and you can't expect me to be particularly enthusiastic about it. But I should think it would be one more reason for *you* to keep quiet.

BEATA.

Then—if you don't mean to do anything—why did you bring me this?

LEONIE (*with irrepressible triumph*).

Why did I bring it? Because I—(*relapses into her usual amiability*)—I thought it might interest you, and you see I was not mistaken. Ah, here comes Norbert!

Enter NORBERT.

NORBERT.

I'm sorry to have kept you, mother. The carriage was— (*Startled.*) Why, Aunt Beata, what's the matter?

BEATA (*making an effort to smile*).

Nothing, Norbert, dear.

LEONIE.

Well, good-bye, Beata. Do be careful of yourself! I should be so sorry to think I had done anything to excite you. Come, Norbert, you must put me in the carriage, and then you can come back to your dear aunt.

NORBERT.

I beg your pardon, mother, but I think Aunt Beata needs me now. If you'll wait for me a moment downstairs——

LEONIE.

What did I say? I congratulate you, Beata! (*She goes out alone.*)

NORBERT.

What has she been saying to you?

BEATA.

Oh, she was right—so right!

NORBERT (*alarmed*).

Aunt Beata!

BEATA (*with an effort*).

Norbert—my son—take me to Ellen. In a few minutes I shall be quite——

NORBERT.

Come, come— (*Leads her gently out. Sounds of talk and laughter come from the inner room.*)

Enter KELLINGHAUSEN.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

(*Putting his head through the curtains.*) Ha! No one there? Have our wives made way with each other? (*To* RICHARD, *who has followed him.*)

They're not so deuced fond of one another.—I say, old man, just now, when I was talking about the elections, why did you all put on that air of statesmanlike reserve? Did I say anything out of the way?

RICHARD.

What an absurd idea!

KELLINGHAUSEN.

One is always liable to make an ass of one's self. I'm not conscious of having blundered, but—oh, well, I sha'n't get anything out of you. (*Raising the curtain and calling out*—) Brachtmann — Usingen — come here a moment.

RICHARD.

Michael, if you take my advice we'll drop the election for the present. I give you my word that if anything occurs that reflects on you——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

On me? Reflects on me? What on earth do you mean? I'm thinking of the party. Our business is to look out for the party.

Enter BRACHTMANN *and the* PRINCE, *followed a moment or two later by* NORBERT.

BRACHTMANN.

Hear, hear! But what are you talking about?

KELLINGHAUSEN (*to* NORBERT).

Aha, young man, where have you come from? Tea in the school-room, eh?

NORBERT.

Aunt Beata was not very well, Uncle Michael. (RICHARD *starts.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Ah?

NORBERT.

She is feeling better now. She will be here in a few minutes.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

That's good—that's good. By the way, Master Norbert, we're going to put you through your paces. How about this so-called "Ordeal," eh? Do you own up to it?

NORBERT.

I'm proud to, Uncle. At least, no—not so very proud; for I've found out lately that it's all been said before, a thousand times better than I've said it.

BRACHTMANN.

And also by a member of the Conservative party?

NORBERT.

Well—no—not exactly.

BRACHTMANN.

Ah—but that's the point.

NORBERT.

I beg your pardon, Herr von Brachtmann, I thought truth was truth, no matter who uttered it.

PRINCE.

What is truth? said Pilate.

NORBERT.

And washed his hands. We also wash our hands of many things, your Highness. I have even heard it said that the use of soap and water is the only thing that distinguishes us from the masses. But no matter how much washing we do, we can't wash off the blood we have shed in the abuse of our class-privileges.

PRINCE (*to* RICHARD).

Very neatly parried. He has a good wrist.

RICHARD.

My dear Norbert, will you give your venerable parent a hearing? We have left far behind us many of what you call our "class-privileges"; but their traditional spirit still survives. And that spirit, whether the modern world condemns it, or the middle-classes make it ridiculous by aping it—that spirit is the safeguard of our order. Believe me, Norbert, we must stand or fall by it.

NORBERT.

Then we must fall, father.

RICHARD.

Possibly—even probably. But meanwhile the one distinction we have left is the right to dispose of our lives. When a nobleman of the Italian Renaissance, or a young blade of the court of Louis XIII., crossed the threshold of his house, he was never sure of re-entering it alive. That was what gave him his audacity, his splendid indifference to danger. To-day we no longer stake our lives so lightly; but the fact that they are ours to stake still gives its keenest edge to living.

THE OTHERS.

Hear! Hear!

NORBERT.

My dear father, you have given us an admirable explanation of the personal view of death. But life is not a personal matter at all. You have said so often enough. Our lives belong to the ideals for which we fight, they belong to the state or to the race——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

And how about our personal sense of honour? What of that, Norbert? Are we to be forbidden to defend with our lives the few things we hold sacred

on earth? May we no longer fall upon the scoundrel who assails them? You will hardly convince us of that, Norbert.

RICHARD.

Then again, Norbert, there may be cases—you are too young to have foreseen them, but they exist—where an honourable man may have done irreparable injury to another's honour. If he admits his guilt, and satisfaction is demanded of him, what is he to do? Is he to run away, or to shelter himself behind the law? The law, which was made to protect the honour of serfs! Should you expect that of him, Norbert?

NORBERT.

If your man of honour admits his guilt, and is ready to pay the penalty, let him be his own judge.

RICHARD.

H'm——

NORBERT.

But—I beg your pardon, father; that is hardly the point. It was all very well for the aristocracy to make its own laws when it had the power to enforce them; but what is to become of its precious "class-privileges" when the modern world laughs at them and the mob refuses to recognise them? When that day comes, I don't see what we can do but take shelter behind the law.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I don't understand you, Norbert. Give us an instance.

NORBERT.

Nothing easier, Uncle Michael. What do you propose to do with the scoundrel who has been insulting you in his electioneering speeches? (*There is a startled movement among his listeners.*) You don't mean to challenge *him,* I suppose?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

What do you——?

NORBERT.

Unless you treat the whole matter with silent contempt—and I fancy you'll hardly do that—it seems to me that a libel suit is the only alternative.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Norbert—are you dreaming—or——

NORBERT.

Why—Uncle Michael—didn't you know?

PRINCE.

Now you've done it, young man!

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Do any of you know what he's driving at?

BRACHTMANN.

Yes.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Richard, what does this mean? What is going on behind my back? You call yourself my friend—why have you kept me in the dark?

RICHARD (*very quietly*).

In the first place, dear Michael, we only heard of the business an hour or two ago; in the second place (*as he speaks,* BEATA *enters from behind*), I am mixed up in it myself.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You? In a slander that concerns me? (RICHARD *nods without speaking.*) Then there was all the more reason——

BRACHTMANN.

My dear Kellinghausen, the fault is mine. For the sake of the party, I asked Völkerlingk not to—

PRINCE (*suddenly noticing* BEATA).

H'm. Perhaps we had better— (*he advances toward* BEATA). My dear Countess——

BEATA *enters quietly.*

BEATA.

Don't be afraid. I know what you are speaking of. I know all about it. Michael, if these gentle-

men would allow us to talk the matter over by ourselves——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Thank you, my dear. But I think you had better keep out of it. Richard — Brachtmann — if you'll come to my study—— (*They both assent.*)

RICHARD (*approaching* BEATA).

I will say good-night, Countess.

BEATA.

Good-night, my dear Völkerlingk. (*Rapidly, in a low voice, as he bends above her hand.*) Does he know?

RICHARD (*in the same tone*).

Not yet.

BEATA (*aloud, with conventional cordiality*).

I shall see you to-morrow? (RICHARD *bows, and follows the other men toward the door.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

ACT III

The same scene: in the afternoon. HOLTZMANN *is waiting. Enter* KELLINGHAUSEN *in hat and fur-lined coat.*

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Ah, Holtzmann—this is very good of you. I'm extremely obliged to you for coming. (*Shakes hands with him.*) Sorry to have kept you waiting. (*Takes off his hat and coat.*) Sit down—sit down.—That is, —perhaps we'd better— Oh, well, my wife's not likely to come in just now.—A cigarette?

HOLTZMANN.

Thanks. I don't smoke.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*lighting a cigarette*).

You remember Meixner—the fellow who gave us such a lot of trouble during the elections? I believe you and he have crossed swords once or twice in public; and didn't you tell me that you knew him personally? When was it that you ran across him?

HOLTZMANN.

There was only one inn in the village, and his room and mine were on the same landing. The meeting

was over at eleven, and I went to bed soon after. About midnight in walks Meixner, as cool as you please, and sits down on my bed. "We haven't finished that argument yet. Let's have it out now," he said. And there he sat till six in the morning.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

(*Takes a copy of the "Lengenfeld News" out of his pocket and glances at it.*) Did that happen before or after the twelfth of January?

HOLTZMANN.

It happened before he made that speech.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*startled*).

What? You knew——?

HOLTZMANN.

Why—naturally.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Herr Holtzmann, we were in the train together for hours. We drove together for miles. I have always treated you as a friend. Why did you never speak of this? (HOLTZMANN *remains silent.*) Let me tell you one thing: you can't put me off with a shrug. If you think you can, you don't know me.

HOLTZMANN.

I beg your pardon, Count Kellinghausen—but I must remind you that I am not in your service.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

My dear Herr Holtzmann, you are known as one of the most zealous supporters of our party. Probably you attach some importance to that fact. Your silence in this matter surprises me, and I shall not fail to draw my own conclusions.

HOLTZMANN (*rising*).

You must draw what conclusions you please, sir. Personally I have nothing to gain by serving your party. I might have a living at any moment, and if I have preferred, for the present, to devote myself to politics, it was only because I thought I could be of use to the cause.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*after a pause*).

I have offended you. You must make allowances for my excitement—this business has unnerved me. (*Holds out his hand.*) Sit down again and let me ask you a question. Has this Meixner any recognised standing in his party, or is he merely a hanger-on?

HOLTZMANN.

He must have a certain standing, since he is their candidate for the next election.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Ha! ha! A nice lot they are! Well, the gentleman has given us his measure by sending copies of this paper to the wives of the men he attacks.

HOLTZMANN.

If he has done that, sir, can you guess his reasons?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

No. Can you?

HOLTZMANN.

Perhaps——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Well——?

HOLTZMANN.

I'm sorry, sir—but I can't say anything more just now.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*rising*).

Good-day, then, Herr Holtzmann.

HOLTZMANN.

My respects to you, sir. (*Goes out.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN (*giving way to his rage*).

Hounds! Brigands! Damn them! All tarred with the same brush——

BEATA *enters.*

BEATA (*quietly*).

Flying into a passion won't mend matters, Michael.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

And I can't make *you* out, either. Here they are, throwing mud at us—calling you I won't say what —and you stand there like—like— Haven't you got any blood in your veins? Don't you realise what it all means?

BEATA.

I haven't much strength to spare, and I have to economise my emotions.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Good God—how white you are! Don't mind me— I'll pull myself together. We won't talk of the damned thing any more.

BEATA.

It will be the first time in twenty years that we haven't talked over what you had on your mind.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I wish to heaven I'd never told you of it. The devil take Leonie! She can't hold her cursed meddling tongue; Richard ought to muzzle her. By the way, it's strange he hasn't shown himself to-day.

BEATA.

I have had a note from him. He asked me to tell you that he is deep in his speech. He is coming as soon as he has a moment to spare.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

There you are again! Just when the man needs a clear head for the great work that's before him, he finds himself involved in this filthy— Ah, well, I'll have the dogs by the throat yet! I'll have them howling for mercy!

BEATA.

Do calm yourself, Michael. Look—your face is all on fire. You know it's bad for you to excite yourself.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

There, there—I'm quiet again. Don't I always do what you tell me? Ah, if I hadn't had *you* all these years, the Lord knows what would have become of me!

BEATA.

Then, on the whole, I've been—satisfactory?

KELLINGHAUSEN (*laughing*).

That sounds as if you were asking for a reference.

BEATA.

Perhaps I am. I want to have one to show in case of need.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

And when do you expect to need it?

BEATA.

Who knows?

Enter CONRAD.

CONRAD (*announcing*).

Baron Brachtmann.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*to* BEATA).

Do you wish to see him?

BEATA.

Yes.

Enter BRACHTMANN. CONRAD *goes out.*

BRACHTMANN.

(*Bows to* KELLINGHAUSEN *and kisses* BEATA'S *hand.*) I am sorry we were not on our guard yesterday, Countess. Even if you had to know of this stupid business, you needn't have heard of it till it had blown over.

BEATA.

Don't reproach yourself, Baron. I should have been sorry to miss such a chance of enlarging my knowledge of human nature.

BRACHTMANN.

Well, at all events, I beg of you both not to take it too seriously. And as for you, my dear Kellinghausen, I say again as I've said before: for God's sake, keep out of the courts.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Ah——?

BRACHTMANN.

Why, my dear man, haven't I been accused of arson and forgery? Haven't I been charged with bribing my constituents to perjure themselves—not to speak of my dodging my taxes, and other sleight-of-hand performances? That's merely the political way of poking fun.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

H'm—your digestion must be stronger than mine. But those charges concerned no one but yourself; if I stood alone in this business, I might see the humour of it. But let them beware how they attack my family! Besides, I've taken steps already——

BRACHTMANN.

What have you done?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I got hold of my counsel this morning. He has made out a retraction which the scoundrel is to sign.

If he won't sign it, we'll take other means. He is to be at my lawyer's at three o'clock.

BEATA (*starting up*).

What? To-day?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

To-day. The sooner the better. By the way, what time is it? I must be on hand myself. Brachtmann, will you come with me?

BRACHTMANN.

I was going to propose it. (*While* KELLINGHAUSEN *puts on his coat, he turns to* BEATA.) If you have any influence over him, for heaven's sake——

BEATA (*in a low voice*).

I can do nothing.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Well, dear, good-bye. If Richard turns up, be sure you make him wait. I shall be back in an hour. (KELLINGHAUSEN *and* BRACHTMANN *go out.*)

BEATA.

(*Closing her eyes, with a miserable smile.*) In an hour!

Enter ELLEN.

ELLEN (*in the doorway*).

Mother!

BEATA.

Come in, dear child.

ELLEN (*kneeling down beside her*).

Mother, mother dear, what has happened? What is it? Papa is so excited and talks to himself so strangely—and you—oh, mother!

BEATA (*smiling*).

Well—what have *I* done?

ELLEN.

If I tell you, you won't—won't stay away? You'll come and lean over my bed every night—just as you've always done?

BEATA (*surprised*).

Then you're awake—when I come?

ELLEN.

Always, always. I never go to sleep till I've heard you.

BEATA.

Dearest! And yet you never stirred!

ELLEN.

Oh, I prided myself on that! But last night it was *so* hard to keep quiet. I could feel your tears on my face—oh, how you were crying! And I did so want to cry with you. But I held my breath and

lay as still as I could.—Mother, what has happened? Won't you tell me? I'm not a child any longer.

BEATA.

Listen, dear. I want to ask you a question. Is there any one in the world—besides your father and me—that you're very fond of?

ELLEN (*softly*).

You know, mother. I don't have to tell you things——

BEATA.

Some one you're so fond of that you could live for him—or even die for him?

ELLEN.

There's nothing in the world I wouldn't do for him!

BEATA.

(*Softly stroking her hair and cheeks.*) H'm——

Enter CONRAD.

CONRAD (*announcing*).

Dr. Kahlenberg.

BEATA (*to* ELLEN).

Go, dear. That is all I wanted to know.

ELLEN.

Mother! (*Goes out.*)

Enter DR. KAHLENBERG. CONRAD *goes out.*

DR. KAHLENBERG.

You sent for me, Countess? Nothing wrong, I hope?

BEATA.

Why, this is your hour for consultations, isn't it?

DR. KAHLENBERG.

Oh, there was no one there but two or three whining women. The kind that can be cured by the atmosphere of a fashionable doctor's waiting-room; so I'm letting them wait.

BEATA.

(*Listening, as though to make sure that they are alone.*) I sha'n't keep you long. Doctor—you know how often I have said to you: "My dear friend, I've got to live—I've simply got to live; show me how—" and how you've always answered: "The only way is to avoid excitement." Well—I've borne that in mind—I've schooled myself to look at life through a tombstone, as it were—my own tombstone, doctor! I've done that. But now—now there are storms ahead, perhaps disasters. If they come, my judgment and energy are equal to them—but my valves are not. I found that out last night—it was only those drops of yours that saved me. But I can't live on those drops—you've warned me not to take them too often.

And I don't want to die of this. Doctor, you must help me!

DR. KAHLENBERG.

Why, what's the meaning of all this? H'm. You're right. Strophanthus and digitalis are not meant for human nature's daily food. Besides, the effect might wear off.—My dear Countess, take your courage in both hands and run away. Turn your back on all these emotions. Human life is simply a process of molecular adjustment complicated by moral idiosyncrasies.

BEATA (*laughing*).

I'm so glad to know it, doctor. (*Growing serious.*) But there is no time to run away. The storm may break in an hour.

DR. KAHLENBERG.

Child, what has happened? Ah, well, I never ask questions.—In an hour?—I am going home to despatch my whining women, and then I'll drop in again and see what has happened in the interval.

BEATA.

And if to-day is only the prelude?

DR. KAHLENBERG.

So much the better. Then we shall have time to look the thing in the face. Meanwhile I'll give you

something new to take—something that your system hasn't got used to. We physicians have a supply of such remedies to tide us over bad places.

BEATA.

Thank you.

DR. KAHLENBERG.

Give me both hands, Countess. You and I know death too well to be much afraid of it. But if you want to live I'll do my best to help you. And now I'll go and assure my other patients that they're really ill. Good-bye. (*He goes out. In the hall he is heard greeting* NORBERT.)

Enter NORBERT.

NORBERT.

Aunt Beata, I'm so glad to see you looking so well. I was almost afraid——

BEATA.

It always cheers me to see you, Norbert. And to-day especially——

NORBERT.

To-day?

BEATA.

'Sh—to-day is a lucky day.

NORBERT.

Lucky? In what way?

BEATA.

Wait and see! Wait and see!

NORBERT.

I say, Aunt Beata, you're not making fun of me? I don't half like the way you're smiling to yourself.

BEATA.

Well, you must make the best of it, dear boy!

NORBERT.

Aunt Beata—you're *not* the same since yesterday. I knew it all along. What a beastly business life is! You—you—of all women!—that they should dare attack you! The scoundrels — the miserable sneaking scoundrels!

BEATA.

Norbert, dear, you must see that this is a matter we can't discuss. Besides, I have something else to talk to you about. Can you tell me what time it is?

NORBERT.

Half-past four.

BEATA.

Will you ring for the lamps, please? Ring twice. (NORBERT *rings.*) I have only a few minutes to

spare, but it won't take long to— (CONRAD *brings in two lamps, and draws the curtains*) to tell you what I— (*She hesitates, constrained by* CONRAD's *presence.*) This is Miss Mansborough's afternoon. She has probably gone out. (CONRAD *leaves the room.*) You will find Ellen alone in her sitting-room—go and look for her—and when you find her, put your arms about her, and say to her, "I love you, and I shall always love you, in this world and the next"—provided there is any next!

NORBERT.

Aunt Beata! (*Falls on his knees before her and hides his face in her lap.*)

BEATA (*struggling with her tears*).

And then sit down in the twilight, you and Ellen, quietly, side by side, and talk of all the happiness that is coming to you and of all the good you mean to do. Let it be your hour of consecration. And I shall be with you all the while—feeling your happiness, thinking your thoughts—all through this next hour of my life.—Now go, Norbert. I hear some one coming—it must be your father. I will tell him —go, dear, go.

NORBERT.

Aunt Beata! (*Kisses her hand.*)

BEATA.

Your hour of consecration—remember that, Norbert. (NORBERT *goes out.*)

Enter RICHARD.

RICHARD.

What has happened? You look radiant.

BEATA.

(*Taking his hand and holding it fast.*) I have settled the future of our children. No matter what happens to us— Why, Richard, aren't you the least bit pleased?—Oh, how ill you look!

RICHARD.

What sort of a night did you have, Beata?

BEATA.

Not so bad.—And how goes the speech? Are you in sight of land?

RICHARD.

Beata—I don't know if I shall be able to speak to-morrow.

BEATA (*alarmed*).

But you must. You must. They all count on you. Dear, you *must.* Is it because of that wretched business last night?

RICHARD.

Partly, I suppose. This new danger has stirred up the whole past.

BEATA.

And your conscience is bothering you again?

RICHARD.

You call it conscience, Beata; I call it consistency. How dare I speak on this bill, how dare I take such a stand before God and man, when my whole life gives me the lie?—Good God!—To stand up and talk about the sanctity of marriage—about the family life as the main support of society—to parade such an argument before the cynics of the Opposition, when with my own hands I have helped to tear down that very support—no, no, I can't justify myself without adopting their own cynical and materialistic creed. And not even then; for what I call God they call social expediency; and this new idol of theirs is more exacting than the Jehovah of the old dispensation. As to acknowledging that words are one thing and actions another—that the man in me is not accountable to the statesman—well, I haven't sunk as low as that—what I give I must give without an afterthought.—And so all my ideas crumble into dust, all my reasoning ends in contradiction—and I find myself powerless to plead the very cause I have at heart!

BEATA.

But why, dearest, why?

RICHARD.

Forgive me. I am so tired; my mind is a blank. First that dreadful scene last night, when a moment's hesitation would have ruined us both. Then my long night at my desk—the superhuman effort of collecting my thoughts after all I'd been through. But as I worked, my subject took such hold of me that I've only just waked up to the question—how on earth is it all to end? (BEATA *is silent.*) Oh, Beata, the truth, the truth! Oh, to be at one with one's self! To have the right to stand up openly for one's convictions! I would give everything for it—happiness, life itself, everything!

BEATA.

And yet you love life.

RICHARD.

I? No—not now. Now that our falsehood is closing in on us, death would be—but don't be frightened; I shall do nothing foolish. There are two of us, and we must hold together. I am so used to sharing every thought with you.—What has happened since yesterday? I suppose Michael has given up the absurd idea of prosecuting the man.

BEATA.

On the contrary.

RICHARD.

What?

BEATA.

At this moment he has probably found out whatever your former secretary knows about us.

RICHARD.

What on earth do you mean?

BEATA.

I haven't interrupted you, dear, because speaking seemed to clear your thoughts. But I haven't attempted to answer you, because every minute is precious.

RICHARD.

Hasn't Brachtmann been here?

BEATA.

Brachtmann came too late.

RICHARD.

Then——?

BEATA.

Even if he had come sooner he could not have prevented anything. Dearest, Michael may come back at any moment, and when he comes we must be ready——

RICHARD.

Don't go on, Beata. Let us suppose the worst: say that Meixner has unearthed a few suspicious circumstances—what use can he make of them? He can't produce any proofs.

BEATA.

Who knows?

RICHARD.

Where are they to come from? The few letters we exchanged were burnt long ago. Copies are not admitted as evidence. He will not be allowed to testify on oath. We have only to keep ourselves in hand as well as we did yesterday, and the whole story will fall to the ground.

BEATA.

And Michael?

RICHARD.

Michael?

BEATA.

Suppose he questions you?

RICHARD.

There can be but one answer, I think.

BEATA.

In our class there is something we call a "word of honour." If he asks you for *that*—? You don't answer.

RICHARD (*confused, breathing heavily*).

We haven't reached that point yet, Beata—and if he does—why, we two are chained together by our past, we are answerable to no one but ourselves. That is all there is left to us.

BEATA.

Is that your answer? You, who tell me you have wrestled with yourself all night because—Richard, I don't believe you!

RICHARD.

Believe me or not, but be sure that, whatever happens, no suspicion shall fall on you—on either of us. And now I beg of you—let me see Michael alone.

BEATA (*smiling*).

Alone?

RICHARD.

I——

BEATA (*still smiling*).

Hush! Do you hear his latch-key?

RICHARD.

Beata, I implore you. You are not fit to bear what is coming! If you value your life, go——

BEATA.

I value yours, and therefore I shall stay.

Enter KELLINGHAUSEN.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*very gravely*).

Good-afternoon, Richard. (*Shakes hands with him.*)

RICHARD.

Good-afternoon, Michael.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*to* BEATA).

Has any one been here?

BEATA.

Norbert—and Dr. Kahlenberg. No one else.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Kahlenberg? At this hour? Is any one ill?

BEATA.

No. He merely came to see me. Shall I give you some tea?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Thanks, no. Richard, you don't want any either? Then, if you'll come into my study——

RICHARD.

With pleasure.

BEATA.

Michael, I don't understand you. You have never shut me out from your counsels. Hitherto, if I have

taken part in your discussions, it was because you wished me to; to-day I have a right to be here.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

My dear child, don't you always have your way? If Richard doesn't object——

RICHARD.

Whatever you wish——

BEATA.

But first I want to give you a piece of good news. Norbert and Ellen are engaged.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*his face lighting up*).

Ha? What? Those two children? I saw it coming, bless their hearts!—but I'd no notion—where are they, Beata? (*Goes to door, left.*)

RICHARD (*in a low tone, to* BEATA).

He knows nothing.

BEATA (*with an effort*).

Michael—never mind—don't speak to them now! To-morrow Norbert will—— (*She breathes painfully.* RICHARD *makes a startled movement.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

What is it? Are you ill?

BEATA.

No—no, it's nothing. But happiness reverberates so! Norbert is coming back to-morrow. He wishes to tell his mother first.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Ah, that's thoughtful of him. I had forgotten about his mother. Well, shake hands, old man. Confound it—I'm ashamed to look you in the face with this cursed thing hanging over us. And to think how happy we three might be—oh, that hound, that vile infamous hound!

RICHARD.

Tell me what happened, Michael.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

There isn't much to tell. My lawyer had a talk with him. He says his only object is to bring out the facts.

RICHARD (*after a short pause*).

Well—let him bring them out.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Let him? You should have heard Brachtmann. The man was beside himself. He began with the old story of the Frenchman who said that if he were accused of stealing the towers of Notre Dame he

would take the first train for the frontier. "No matter how blameless you all are, the lie will stick to you," he said. "It will stick to you and to your children and to your party." I had to give him my word of honour that, whatever happens, I will do nothing to bring scandal on the party.

RICHARD.

But you haven't stuck to your resolve?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

How could I? We can't wring the scoundrel's neck without landing ourselves in prison. Norbert was right yesterday. In such cases we have no refuge left but the courts. There is more in that boy's ideas than I was willing to admit at the time. Well—meanwhile I've agreed to think the matter over for twenty-four hours. A mere formality, of course—and yet not quite, after all. The fact is, I wanted to talk it out with you.

RICHARD.

Very well.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Beata—Richard—I don't need to be told that there's nothing wrong in this house—nothing wrong between you two, to put it plainly. I can see that for myself. But in such a dirty business the most

harmless fact may be used against you; and you won't misunderstand me if I ask you—both— You see, you two have always been in such close sympathy—I don't say that to reproach you—God forbid! It was natural enough—you're both so much cleverer than I am—but I ask you, for all our sakes, to look back and try to remember if you've ever written each other any letters that might—might seem—to an outsider —a little too friendly? Good heavens! *I* should understand it if you had! Or—or—have you ever written anything about *me?* Anything that might—? There are plenty of things to criticise about me. But I must know the truth. There must not be the least pretext for this attack. I ask you to stop and consider.

RICHARD.

There is nothing to consider, my dear Michael.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Not so fast, my dear fellow! Take time. Think the matter over.

RICHARD.

There is nothing to think over.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Beata——?

BEATA.

My answer is the same as Richard's, of course.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Richard, our fate is in your hands. Do you advise me to bring suit?

RICHARD.

Oh—if you ask my advice——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I don't ask your advice but your assurance. I have pledged myself not to endanger the party. Give me your word of honour that I can bring suit without doing so.

RICHARD (*straightening himself*).

I give you my word of honour that—you—— (BEATA *gives a suppressed cry.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

What is the matter? What ails you?

BEATA (*looking at* RICHARD).

He will give you his word of honour, and then he will go home and blow his brains out. Don't you see it in his face?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

What do you mean?

RICHARD.

Kellinghausen, ask your wife to leave the room, and I will——

BEATA.

Richard, for fifteen years we have shared all our joys and sorrows. We must share this too.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

(*Half strangled, tearing his collar open, and then throwing himself on* RICHARD.) You—you—you!

RICHARD (*seizing both his hands*).

Michael, take care! This must be between ourselves. Remember that.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Yes—yes—yes; I pledged my word—I remember—I—oh, you—you—— (*He sinks down in a chair near the table, and hides his face with tearless sobs.*)

BEATA (*approaching him after a pause*).

Dear Michael, Richard and I conquered our feelings long ago. That is why we are so calm now. What happened between us happened years ago, and we are ready to pay the cost, whatever it is.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Oh, as far as he's concerned, it's simple enough. He and I can soon settle our account.

RICHARD.

Yes.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

But you—you—how can you justify yourself? How have you reconciled it to your conscience to live beside me half a lifetime with this thing between us? Why didn't you come and ask me to set you free?

BEATA.

Yes—that was what *he* wanted—he has such a sense of honour! And to this day he has never understood why I wouldn't. I loved him too well to ruin his life—that's all. Even if he could have got a divorce and married me, such a marriage would have been his ruin. I should simply have finished the work that Leonie had begun. But what I wanted was to save him. And so all these years I have lied for him——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

And what have you done for *me?* Or didn't I enter into your calculations?

BEATA.

Michael, you must see that we can't discuss that now. It would be laughable if I were to try to explain to you——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Ha! Ha! Lies and deception! Wife—friend—everything! Everything! (*To* RICHARD.) Why do

you stand there as if you were struck dumb? Why don't *you* try and whitewash yourself too?

RICHARD.

You said just now that our account was easy to settle.

BEATA.

He sees things differently. I speak for myself. He looks at things as you do.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

And yet——

BEATA.

Wait, please! I have one word more to say. I have staked everything and lost—it's all over for us, all three of us. If I had spoken years ago, the same thing would have happened. You told me just now that I had made you happy. Well, that is what my lie has done. It has made you happy for fifteen years. Blame me for it—but don't forget it——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

And God—and retribution? Do you never think of such things? No repentance—no remorse? Nothing? Nothing?

RICHARD.

Spare her, Michael. Let me answer for her. (KELLINGHAUSEN *advances toward him with clenched fist.*)

BEATA.

You have questioned *me,* Michael; let me question you. Must every natural instinct end in remorse and repentance? Sin? I am not conscious of sinning. I did the best that it was in me to do. I simply refused to be crushed by your social laws. I asserted my right to live; my right to self-preservation. Perhaps it was another way of suicide—that's no matter. You know what my life has been—how I've had to buy it, hour by hour and drop by drop, at the nearest chemist's—well, wretched as it is, I've loved it too dearly to disown it now! Yes, I've loved it—I've loved everything—everything around me—you too, Michael—ah, don't laugh—yes, you too—even if I've—ah— (*Her breath comes in long gasps and she reels and clutches a chair, closing her eyes as she leans against it. Then she opens them again.*) Which one of you will — help me to the door? (RICHARD *makes a movement, and then draws back.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Beata, from now on there will be no one to help you.

BEATA.

Thank you. (*With an intense effort, she walks out of the room.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN (*to* RICHARD).

And now——?

RICHARD.

Do what you like. Say what you like. Curse me —shoot me. I sha'n't defend myself.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You admit that one of us must die?

RICHARD.

No; I don't admit it; but I am at your orders.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

A duel between us is impossible——

RICHARD.

Impossible——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I don't mean on account of the children. *That's* all at an end.

RICHARD.

Why must it be at an end if one of us dies? But I am at your orders.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I have pledged my word not to bring any scandal on the party. You are under the same obligation.

RICHARD.

Yes.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

So that the only thing left——

RICHARD.

Before you go any further, let me tell you that I decline to go through the farce of an American duel.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You decline—? Perhaps you want to sneak out of the whole business?

RICHARD.

You don't believe that!

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Well—what other way is there?

RICHARD.

I know a way—but—— (NORBERT'S *voice is heard outside, speaking with* CONRAD.)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

(*With sudden decision, opening the door.*) Norbert!

RICHARD (*following him*).

For God's sake, Michael—do you want to disgrace my whole house?

KELLINGHAUSEN (*opening the door*).

You shall see.—Norbert! Come in, my boy—come!

NORBERT *enters.*

NORBERT.

Uncle Michael, what is the matter with Aunt Beata? The doctor is with her, and Ellen has been called——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Nothing serious. Don't be alarmed. (*Takes his hand.*) Norbert, your father and I were just talking of last evening. You remember that stupid business interrupted our talk, and we never heard the end of your argument. Let us have it now. Sit down—sit down, Richard. (*They all seat themselves.*) There was one phrase of yours that struck me. You said—you said—that if——

RICHARD.

You said that if a man of honour has injured another and is called on to atone for it, he is the best judge of his own punishment.

NORBERT (*laughing*).

Did I? Very likely—but my head is so full of other things just now that I couldn't swear to it.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

That was not quite what I meant; but no matter. Suppose we take such a case. If the injured person says: "One of us two must die"—what ought the other to answer?

NORBERT.

Why, Uncle Michael, I should say that depended on the nature of the injury—doesn't it?

RICHARD.

Let us say, for the sake of argument, that the wrong is the gravest that one man can do another; let us say he has seduced his friend's wife. Has the husband a right to the other man's life?

NORBERT.

Why, father—there can be but one answer to that. And if the other man is a man of honour—though I don't see how he could be, do you?—he would be more eager to give his life than the husband could possibly be to take it.

RICHARD.

H'm. Perhaps you're right. Thank you, my boy.

NORBERT.

Uncle Michael, at what time to-morrow may I see you?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I'll send you word, Norbert.

NORBERT.

Thanks. Don't make it too late, will you? Don't keep me waiting too long. Good-bye. Good-bye, father. (*Goes out.*)

RICHARD.

Well—are you satisfied?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You put the question in a way that suggests suicide. That was not——

RICHARD.

It is your own choice. All I ask is two days' respite. You won't refuse it? (KELLINGHAUSEN *shrugs his shoulders.*) Good-bye. (*Goes out.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

ACT IV

A study in the house of RICHARD VÖLKERLINGK. *Doors on the right and left, at the back. A fireplace in the middle background, the rest of the wall hidden by book-cases, which frame the fireplace and doors. In the foreground, to the left, a window. To the right of it, a writing-table. In the centre a table covered with periodicals and books. On the right a leather sofa and arm-chairs. Behind these a door. Rich and sombre decorations, old pictures, armour, etc. A hanging-lamp with a green shade, another lamp on a table, both lit. Through the window one sees the twilight.* HOLTZMANN *is seated at the centre-table, reading.*

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE.

Herr Holtzmann, some one is asking for the Baron.

HOLTZMANN.

Why, you know the Baron is at the Reichstag.

GEORGE.

He says it's important that the Baron should see him. He wants to know when he can call again.

HOLTZMANN.

Do you know who it is?

GEORGE.

Well—not exactly a gentleman. What shall I tell him?

HOLTZMANN.

The Baron speaks this afternoon. He will not leave till the House rises. Tell the man to come back in an hour. (GEORGE *goes out.*)

NORBERT *enters.*

NORBERT (*greatly excited*).

Herr Holtzmann—haven't you been at the Reichstag? (HOLTZMANN *shakes his head without speaking.*) Then you haven't heard? My father has had the most wonderful triumph—they say there has never been anything like it.

HOLTZMANN.

Ah?

NORBERT.

I wish I could give you an idea of it! Look at me—I'm shaking all over! If you could have heard the way the words rushed out, the way the thoughts trod on each other's heels! He began by sketching the psychology of the modern man, and from that he developed a theory of marriage, with its outward

obligations and inner ideals—the marriage of to-day in its highest, noblest sense—but you'll read what he said; you'll see if I'm exaggerating. Then he went on to the practical application of his theory. In this unsettled age, when parents are losing their control over their children, and the state its hold over the citizen, when even God and His priests see the soul of man slipping away from them—at such a time we must do all we can to strengthen the only tie that holds humanity together—the only tie that gives youth the shelter of the family life till habit becomes duty, and duty the law of being, and through obedience to that law a strong and enduring national soul is created. Isn't that beautiful, Herr Holtzmann? Isn't that a glorious idea?

HOLTZMANN.

Very fine, very fine. But doesn't such an argument lead back to the standpoint of the Church, which——

NORBERT.

When marriage is a mockery, he said, the state may intervene and dissolve it. That was all. Never in my life have I heard such a scathing denunciation of infidelity!

HOLTZMANN.

Ah? Indeed?

NORBERT.

There was such terrible menace in his words that I—oh, well, I can't explain it—but I began to feel afraid—of I don't know what——

HOLTZMANN (*half to himself*).

This will explain——

NORBERT.

Explain what? What do you mean?

GEORGE *enters.*

GEORGE (*urgently*).

Herr Holtzmann!

HOLTZMANN (*to* NORBERT).

One moment, please. (*He goes up to* GEORGE.)

GEORGE (*in a whisper*).

The man is here again, and asking to see you. He is waiting in the café across the street.

HOLTZMANN.

Doesn't he give his name?

GEORGE.

Yes. Something like Meister or Meissner.

HOLTZMANN (*startled, in a whisper*).

Meixner?

GEORGE.

That's it.

HOLTZMANN (*turning to* NORBERT).

Will you excuse me? Some one has sent for me.

NORBERT.

Don't let me keep you. (HOLTZMANN *and* GEORGE *go out.* NORBERT *goes to the window, his hand shading his eyes, and gazes out eagerly.* RICHARD *comes in quietly and lays his portfolio on the writing-table.*)

NORBERT (*turning toward him*).

Father! Father! (*He throws himself in* RICHARD'S *arms.* RICHARD *thanks him with a smile.*)

NORBERT.

Mother sends you her love and is sorry she can't be here to congratulate you. She's in waiting on the Princess this evening.

RICHARD.

Ah? (*He moves about the room.*)

NORBERT.

Oh, father, how happy you must be! How they cheered, how they fought to get near you and shake your hand! Oh, if only I could have one such hour in my life!

RICHARD (*laying a hand on his shoulder*).

If you do, my son, may you pay for it less dearly!

NORBERT.

What do you mean?

RICHARD.

Listen, Norbert.—Have you heard anything of Aunt Beata?

NORBERT.

I went there, but they told me she wouldn't see any one.

RICHARD (*musingly*).

H'm.

NORBERT.

The fact is, I wanted to see Uncle Michael.

RICHARD.

(*Who has walked toward the window.*) Uncle Michael? That reminds me that I wanted to tell you— How the sunset shines on the house-tops over there! Everything is in a glow—we shall have glorious winter weather soon——

NORBERT.

You said you had something to tell me, father.

RICHARD.

Yes, yes; to be sure. But first, haven't you something to tell *me?*

NORBERT (*with an embarrassed smile*).

Yes; but not to-day—when you're so——

RICHARD.

The very day, dear boy! To-morrow I may—but there's nothing to tell, after all. Aunt Beata and I have seen this coming and it has made us very happy.

NORBERT.

(*Flinging his arms about his father.*) Father! Father!

RICHARD.

Norbert! My dear lad! But we don't yet know what Uncle Michael will say——

NORBERT.

Uncle Michael? When I'm *your* son? Father, you've heard something. You wouldn't frighten me for nothing.

RICHARD.

I have heard nothing. But, Norbert, listen. Whatever comes to you in after days, I want you to remember one thing: it doesn't matter whether we succeed or not. What we need is the guiding note of a voice that seems the echo of our best hopes. It doesn't matter whether we are mistaken in the voice or not—the great thing is to hear it. And the worst thing is not to feel the need of it.

NORBERT.

Thank you, father. I'm not sure I understand—but you may be sure I shall listen for the voice.

RICHARD.

And one thing more. Uncle Michael is very busy just now. Leave him alone for a day or two—even if you have the chance of speaking. And let me see you to-morrow morning early. I may have to go on a long journey—and before I start——

NORBERT.

On a journey? Now? Just as you——

RICHARD (*nods*).

This is between ourselves. But meanwhile, try to see Aunt Beata for a moment. I want you to tell her—but stay, I'll write. (*He seats himself at the writing-table and begins to write.*)

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE.

His Excellency Baron Ludwig von Völkerlingk.

Enter BARON LUDWIG. RICHARD *starts up, pleased and surprised.*

GEORGE.

The evening papers, your Excellency. (*He puts them down and goes out.*)

RICHARD.

Ludwig! It's a long time since you've given me this pleasure.

BARON LUDWIG.

Thank you, Richard.

RICHARD.

Will you excuse me a moment? I am finishing a letter. (*He folds the letter, puts it into an envelope and writes the address, while* NORBERT *and* BARON LUDWIG *are greeting each other.*) There!

NORBERT (*taking the letter*).

An answer, father?

RICHARD.

As soon as possible. (NORBERT *goes out.*)

BARON LUDWIG.

My dear Richard—we're quite alone, I suppose? (RICHARD *nods.*) Forgive the suggestion, but—(*he glances about the room*) Leonie sometimes overhears——

RICHARD.

Leonie is out.

BARON LUDWIG.

So much the better. But first let me tell you with what admiration I listened to you just now—what breathless admiration! (RICHARD *makes a gesture of*

thanks.) Still, I confess that your having to speak on such a subject just at present made me—er—a little nervous——

RICHARD.

Why so?

BARON LUDWIG.

I was almost afraid—but we'll go into that presently.—Well, at all events, if nothing goes wrong, you may look upon this as the starting-point of a career that any man living might envy you.

RICHARD.

What do you mean?

BARON LUDWIG.

A certain personage was heard to say after your speech: *That is the man I need.* Don't look as if you saw a ghost. You deserve it all, my dear Richard.

RICHARD.

(*Walks up and down in agitated silence.*) Ludwig—you have led me to the top of a high mountain and shown me the promised land in which I shall never set foot. Give me time to renounce the idea.

BARON LUDWIG.

Why should you talk of renouncing it? But this brings me to the object of my visit. Richard, how

long do you suppose your enemies will wait before making capital out of your speech?

RICHARD.

I'm ready for them, my dear fellow. I'll pay the shot—to the last penny!

BARON LUDWIG (*in a lower tone*).

We are talking at cross-purposes. I referred to the insinuations of your former secretary.

RICHARD.

I understand.

BARON LUDWIG.

You know there is nothing they are so eager to attack as our private life. Of course I don't for a moment imagine the man has anything to go on—but unless you can silence him he may make a scandal in which everything will go under—your name, your career—and other things besides.

RICHARD.

What can I do to prevent it?

BARON LUDWIG.

For one thing, you might jump into a cab and hunt your man down with a big bribe in your pocket.

RICHARD.

Do you think that kind of man could be bribed?

BARON LUDWIG.

My dear Richard, this is not merely a matter of life and death. Remember that. Of course you may be too late; but it's the only way I can suggest. (*There is a knock on the door.*)

RICHARD.

Come in.

Enter HOLTZMANN.

HOLTZMANN.

I beg your pardon, Baron. (*In a low voice.*) An important matter——

RICHARD.

You may speak before my brother. I have no secrets from him.

HOLTZMANN.

There is a man waiting in my room who wishes to speak to you. His name is Meixner. (*The two brothers look at each other.*)

RICHARD.

Thanks. Please tell Herr Meixner that I will see him in a moment. (HOLTZMANN *goes out.*)

BARON LUDWIG.

Well, this ends my mission. Good-bye, Richard. Your luck frightens me.

RICHARD (*laughing bitterly*).

My luck!

BARON LUDWIG (*pressing his hands*).

Don't hang back now, my dear fellow. The way is open to you.

RICHARD.

Thank you. Good-bye. (BARON LUDWIG *goes out.* RICHARD *rings.*)

Enter GEORGE.

RICHARD.

I will see the gentleman who is waiting. You will remain in the ante-room. Don't let in any one else. (GEORGE *goes out. After a short pause* MEIXNER *enters.*)

RICHARD.

Herr Meixner, after what has happened, doesn't it strike you as rather a liberty that you should enter my house?

MEIXNER.

(*Speaking in a hoarse voice, with an occasional cough.*) May I take my muffler off? My lungs have gone wrong—makes it very hard for me to talk down my adversary in one of those crowded smoky halls.—But what's to be done about it?

RICHARD.

May I ask what you want of me?

MEIXNER.

Really, Baron, from the way you look at me I might almost ask what you want of *me*. But I suppose it's my turn first.—I haven't come out of malice. You can safely offer me a chair.

RICHARD.

If you haven't come out of malice you probably won't stay long enough to need one.

MEIXNER.

Ah—thanks. Well, I'll take the hint and be brief. It was down at Lengenfeld, you know. Herr Holtzmann and I sat up a whole night arguing over the elections. Why not—two honourable antagonists, eh? Herr Holtzmann, as a good theologian, was all for the sanctity of the social order. I laughed at him—he's at the age when the disciple looks up to his master, and he brought you up as an example. I laughed at him again.—"If Baron Völkerlingk is not what I believe him to be," said he, "nothing is what I believe it to be, and I'll go over to your side." "Shake hands on that," said I; and we did. The next day, in my speech, I made that allusion—you know what I mean—and as no one took it up, and I began to be afraid it might hang fire, I sent about

a few copies of the paper. That helped. I got my nomination the next day.

RICHARD.

Not in my district.

MEIXNER.

No matter. Well—I found I'd made a stupid blunder. I'd meant to convert Holtzmann but I hadn't meant to ruin *you*. Do you see? Then you made your speech to-day—and after that— Well, I've been tramping the streets ever since, saying to myself: The man who could make that speech after what he's been through—well, he's suffered enough. —Baron Völkerlingk, here are two letters written to you by— (*he looks about him cautiously*) by a lady I needn't name. Don't ask me how I got them. I didn't steal them; and here they are, if you'll give me your word that you'll put a stop to that libel-suit.

RICHARD.

I think the suit has already been stopped.

MEIXNER.

H'm—well, your thinking so is hardly sufficient.

RICHARD.

It will have to be stopped, even if you keep those letters.

MEIXNER (*startled*).

Even if—? H'm—do things look as badly as that for you?

RICHARD.

You will kindly leave me out of the question.

MEIXNER.

Ah—well—here are your letters. (*Lays them on the table.*)

RICHARD.

If you didn't wish to do me a public injury, why not have shown them privately to my secretary?

MEIXNER.

They might have been forgeries.

RICHARD.

They may be so still.

MEIXNER.

When I've taken the trouble to return them to you? Holtzmann doesn't think so. He's packing up already. Perhaps you'd like to see him before he leaves?

RICHARD.

No.

MEIXNER.

Baron Völkerlingk, if I have got you into trouble don't set it down to ill-feeling. Principle is prin-

ciple, if we have to hang for it. Every man who has convictions must be prepared to go to the stake for them. Good-day to you, Baron Völkerlingk. (*He goes out.*)

RICHARD.

(*Clutches the letters and strikes his clenched hand against his brow.*) Oh, to live again—to live, to live!

Enter NORBERT.

NORBERT.

Father——

RICHARD.

Well?

NORBERT.

Aunt Beata was out.

RICHARD.

Out? At this hour? Why, she never goes out except for her morning drive. Where can she have gone?

NORBERT.

No one knows.

RICHARD.

But she must have ordered the carriage?

NORBERT.

It seems not.

RICHARD.

Well, thank you, my boy. What time is it?

NORBERT.

Nearly seven.

RICHARD.

You had better dine without me. I shall go and enquire. She may have——

NORBERT.

Is there anything I can do, father?

RICHARD.

No, no. Thanks, Norbert. (*He gives him his hand.*) Good-night, my lad.

NORBERT.

Good-night, father. (*Goes out.*)

RICHARD (*to himself*).

My God! My God! (*He hurries toward the door, and starts back amazed.*)

Enter BEATA, *in hat and cloak, her face thickly veiled.*

RICHARD.

Beata! (*He closes the door.*) Where have you come from? Tell me, for heaven's sake!

BEATA.

Alive!

RICHARD.

Did any one see you except George?

BEATA.

Alive—alive! (*She sinks into a chair, trembling and hiding her face in her hands.*)

RICHARD.

Good God, Beata, rouse yourself! What has happened? Don't keep me in suspense. What is it, dearest? Answer me.

BEATA.

I'm so cold.

RICHARD (*opening the door*).

George! (GEORGE *enters.*) Light the fire.

GEORGE (*kneels down and lights it*).

Yes, your Excellency.

RICHARD.

And see that no one interrupts us. I am engaged with Madame von Kellinghausen.

GEORGE.

Yes, your Excellency.

RICHARD.

If the Baroness comes in, say nothing, but let me know.

GEORGE.

Yes, your Excellency. (*Goes out.*)

RICHARD.

And now, come and sit by the fire. But take off your cloak first—there. And your hat and veil too?

BEATA.

(*Letting her arms sink down helplessly.*) I can't.

RICHARD.

Wait, dear. (*He loosens her veil.*) How white you are! Come to the fire. (*He leads her to the fireplace.*) There! is that right?

BEATA.

Everything is right as long as you're alive!

RICHARD.

Why, Beata, what put such an idea into your head?

BEATA.

Hasn't it been in *yours* ever since yesterday?

RICHARD.

There will be no duel, I assure you.

BEATA.

I have just read your speech. It was your good-bye to the world. Oh, don't laugh—don't deny it. I've felt death hanging over us ever since.

RICHARD.

And I swear to you that I've never loved life better, have never been more determined to live, than now that I've won back my place in the world.

BEATA.

You swear that to me?

RICHARD.

I swear it.

BEATA.

And yet you must die.

RICHARD.

So must we all. But I mean to put it off as long as possible, I promise you!

BEATA (*standing up*).

Richard, for fifteen years we haven't kept a single thought from each other, yet now that the end has come you throw me over as if you were paying off a discarded mistress.

RICHARD (*agitated*).

Beata!

BEATA.

Don't be afraid. I am not going to force your confidence. You would only repeat what Michael has already told me—that you are going to travel, to disappear for a while.—Is this the laugh with

which we were to have greeted death? Often and often, at night, when I've lain in bed struggling for breath, I've said to myself that I should die before morning. What if it really happened to-night? You'd have to wait then—you'd have no right to follow me. Think how people would talk if you did! (*With a sudden start.*) The children, Richard—there must be no shadow on the children.

RICHARD.

Beata, don't talk so wildly. Do shake off such fancies.

BEATA (*musing*).

Yes—yes.—You know you'll have a note from Michael in the morning.

RICHARD.

What do you mean?

BEATA.

A note asking you to luncheon to-morrow to meet some friends. Nothing more.

RICHARD.

What is the object——

BEATA.

It seems there has been some gossip at the clubs, and this is the shortest way of putting a stop to it. (*Entreatingly.*) You'll come, Richard, won't you?

RICHARD.

Beata! Why should we go through this new misery?

BEATA (*in wild anxiety*).

Richard, you *will* come? You must come.

RICHARD.

I can't, Beata.

BEATA.

It is the last thing I shall ever ask of you. Now you're smiling again—well, I'll believe anything you tell me—about your travelling, about your disappearing—I'll believe anything, if you'll only come. Richard, come for the children's sake. And if not for the children's sake, come for mine—or I shall die of it—I shall die of it, Richard, in the night——

RICHARD (*overcome*).

I will come.

BEATA.

Give me your hand. (RICHARD *gives it.* BEATA *takes his hand, and passes it over her eyes and cheeks.*) There—I'm quite quiet again, you see. (*Sits down.*) I don't know if I told you that I'm going to Rossitsch to-morrow.

RICHARD.

For good?

BEATA (*nodding*).

So that, unless you come and pay me a visit there——

RICHARD.

This is good-bye?

For always. So you needn't keep yourself so frightfully in hand. (*He looks at her doubtfully.*) You needn't, really. (*He falls on his knees before her and hides his face in her lap.*)

BEATA (*stroking his hair*).

"I knew a sad old tale of Tristram and Iseult"—How grey you've grown in these last few days! (*She kisses his hair.*) Don't get up yet—I want to look at you again—for the last time.—Only I can't see you—your face has been like a mask ever since yesterday.—Look at me just once as you used to—just once!

RICHARD (*rising*).

I've never changed to you.

BEATA.

Haven't you?—Who knows?—We've grown old, you and I. There's a layer of ashes on our hearts—a layer of conventionality and good behaviour and weariness and disappointment.—Who knows what we were like before the fire went out? Not a trace is left to tell—not so much as a riband or a flower.

The words are forgotten, the letters are destroyed, the emotions have faded. Here we sit like two ghosts on our own graves. (*Passionately.*) Oh, to go back just once to the old life, and then—forget everything——

RICHARD.

Do you really want to?

BEATA.

You can work wonders—but not that!

RICHARD.

(*Draws out the letters, and opening one, begins to read it to her.*) "Rossitsch, June 13th, 1881. Two o'clock in the morning."

BEATA.

What is that?

RICHARD.

Listen. (*Reading.*) "I don't want to sleep, dearest. The night is too bright and my happiness too great. The moonlight lies on Likowa, and already the dawn shows red through the network of elms. The blood beats like a hammer in my temples—I scarcely know how I am going to bear the riches of my new life. Oh, how I pray God to let me live it out beside you—not as your wife, that would be too wild a dream!—but as an unseen influence at your side, faint as the moonlight which rests

upon your sleep, or as the first glow of dawn that wakes you to new endeavour."

BEATA.

I must have been listening to Wagner. Let me see; did I really write that? (*She reads.*) "For I mean to make you the greatest among men, you, my discoverer and my deliverer—" That's not so bad, you know. (*Reads on.*) "If only heaven would let me die, and give you my life to live as well as your own." (*She rises suddenly with a strange look on her face.*)

RICHARD.

This letter and another have just been brought to me by—Meixner. If he had come yesterday we should have been saved. Now it is too late.

BEATA.

Too late?—Oh, Richard, how ungrateful I've been! Why, every prayer of my youth has been granted—the long sad sweet dream at your side— (*She breaks suddenly into laughter.*)

RICHARD.

Why do you laugh?

BEATA.

I laugh because in your speech this morning you disowned us both—disowned our long sad sweet

dream. Oh, I don't blame you, Richard. It isn't your conscience that torments you, it's the conscience of the race. I'm only a woman—what do I care for the race? You felt that you were sinning—I felt that I had risen above myself, that I had attained the harmony nature meant me to attain. And because I feel that——

RICHARD.

You deny that we have sinned——?

BEATA.

I deny nothing. I affirm nothing. I stand on the farther shore of life, and look over at you with a smile. Oh, Richard, Richard (*she laughs*), did you ever really think I had given you up? I never gave you up. I never ceased to long for you, passionately, feverishly, day and night, when you were away and when you were near me—always, always—and all the while I was playing the cool, quiet friend, biting my lips to keep the words back, and crushing down my rebellious heart—yes, and through it all I was so happy—so unspeakably, supremely happy——

RICHARD (*going up to her*).

Take care, dear. You mustn't excite yourself. I shall have to send you home.

BEATA.

(*Letting her head sink on his breast with a happy smile.*) Home? This is home.

RICHARD.

They will be wondering where you are. They may send here to find you.

BEATA (*mysteriously, urgently*).

No, no—not yet! I have so much to say to you. There are so many secrets I must tell you. Everything has grown so clear to me—I wish I—Richard, you will surely come to-morrow? (*Crying out suddenly.*) I want to stay with you. I am afraid of to-night!

RICHARD.

Beata, do try to control yourself.

BEATA.

Yes, yes—I'll control myself.— (*She stands motionless, benumbed.*) Give me my hat. (*He brings her the hat and veil.*) And my veil. (*Fervently.*) You still love your life, Richard? You still want to live?

RICHARD.

Haven't I told you so? Ever since——

BEATA.

Never fear, dearest. You *shall* live.

RICHARD (*with outstretched hands*).

Beata, before we part——

BEATA.

Don't thank me — don't kiss me. I — good-bye, Richard.— (*She goes out.*)

RICHARD.

Beata!

CURTAIN.

ACT V

ACT V

The dining-room at COUNT KELLINGHAUSEN'S. *In the middle of the stage a table with six covers. On the right a sofa, table, and chairs. Sideboard on the left. In the centre at the back a wide door leading into the drawing-room. Door on the right into anteroom, door on the left into inner apartments. A window on the right, in the foreground. Grey light of a winter's day.* ELLEN *is busy arranging the flowers on the table.* CONRAD *in the background. Enter* BEATA *from the left.*

ELLEN.

Oh, mother, I'm so glad you've come. Will the flowers do?

BEATA.

Beautifully, dear. (CONRAD *goes out.*)

ELLEN.

And the cards? Look—I've put you here, of course, with Baron Ludwig on your right, and Prince Usingen on your left.—Mother! You're not listening.

BEATA.

Yes I am. But Brachtmann is older than the Prince. They must change places.

ELLEN.

Very well. And this is Uncle Richard's seat, next to father's.

Enter KELLINGHAUSEN.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

What about father?

ELLEN.

I was only saying that I had put Uncle Richard next to you.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Next to me?—Yes, yes; of course. Quite right. (*He pets her.*) Now, you monkey, be off!

BEATA.

I shall see you before luncheon, dear.

ELLEN.

Yes, mother. (*Goes out.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I came to speak to you about our arrangements. I have just received a telegram from Rossitsch. Your rooms are ready for you. To prevent any talk, I

shall take you there and leave you. I suppose you are ready to start this evening?

BEATA.

Whenever you please, dear Michael.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You don't seem to have made any preparations.

BEATA (*smiling*).

I have so few to make!

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I have no objection to Ellen's remaining with you till the spring. Then we can see about sending her to a boarding-school.

BEATA.

I consent to that too.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You could hardly expect your refusal to make much difference.

BEATA (*still smiling*).

Don't be afraid. I understand my position.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

And who is to blame for it?

BEATA.

My dear Michael, we neither of us care for tragedy. Why not let that be?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You're right.—Where have you put my seat?

BEATA.

Here.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Another torture to undergo!

BEATA.

Isn't it more than you can bear?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Perhaps—but it can't be helped. I had to have these people—I've got to go through with it.

BEATA.

Yes, you've got to go through with it. And so have I. I need them more than you do.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You? Why?

BEATA.

You will see later.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You have no right to keep anything from me——

BEATA.

Are you keeping nothing from *me?* (*He turns away.*) Michael, here is a letter in which I have

written something I can't well say to you. Will you promise not to open it till luncheon is over?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Yes.

BEATA.

You give me your word?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Yes.

BEATA (*giving him the letter*).

Here it is.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Thank you. Then—I suppose—we— (*Goes to the door.*)

BEATA.

Michael!

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Eh?

BEATA.

You know I'm not very strong—oh, don't misunderstand me! I'm not trying to work on your feelings—but you know how much is at stake. If Richard Völkerlingk should die suddenly, and I——

KELLINGHAUSEN (*tortured*).

I beg of you, Beata! I——

BEATA.

Well?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Go on.

BEATA.

You had something to say.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*confused*).

I—I was only going to tell you—that there will be no duel.

BEATA.

Ah.—Then the danger I spoke of is removed, and I——

Enter CONRAD.

CONRAD.

His Highness Prince Usingen and Baron Brachtmann are in the drawing-room.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

I will come at once. (CONRAD *goes out.*)

BEATA.

If you don't mind I will join you at table.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

You are not well.

BEATA (*carelessly*).

It's nothing to speak of. Don't keep them waiting.—(KELLINGHAUSEN *stands before her, shaken*

with tearless sobs. BEATA *goes up to him and lays her hand softly on his arm.*) Michael, dear, when I think how I have hurt you I should like to fall down before you and kiss your hands—I should like to show you—what is in my heart—but it's too late to say such things now——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Good-bye. (*He goes out.* BEATA *rings and* CONRAD *enters.*)

BEATA.

Ask Countess Ellen to bring me my drops. (CONRAD *goes out.* BEATA *stretches out her arms and passes her hands over her face.*)

Enter ELLEN.

ELLEN (*in the doorway*).

Mother! Are you ill? (BEATA *stretches out her arms again, half beckoning* ELLEN, *half warding her off.* ELLEN, *hastening to her.*) Mother! Mother! what is it?

BEATA (*softly*).

Nothing, nothing. (*She strokes* ELLEN's *hair, lets her arms slip gradually from the girl's shoulders, and finds the phial containing the drops in her left hand. A long shudder.*) Give me the drops.

ELLEN.

How you snatch! Here they are. (BEATA *turns the phial about in her hand.*) Mother, are we really going to Rossitsch, this evening?

BEATA (*nodding*).

Yes.

ELLEN.

In midwinter? Why do we go?

BEATA.

H'm——

ELLEN.

What will Norbert say? It looks as though you wanted to separate us——

BEATA.

Does it? Does it really look so?

ELLEN.

No, no, no—forgive me! No.

BEATA.

But others might want to separate you—for life —for life, Ellen! Do you understand?

ELLEN.

Mother!

BEATA.

Shall I tell you what to do if ever that happens? Wait till you are of age, and then go to him wherever he is, and say: "My mother sent me." Do you see?

ELLEN.

Yes, yes—but why——?

BEATA.

By and by, at Rossitsch, I'll tell you. When we sit together in the big hall, over the fire, with the wind singing in the chimney. You'll like that, won't you, dear? We'll be so jolly together, you and I. And now, darling, go. (*Passionately.*) No, come back— (*kissing her*) and now— (*smiling at her*) go dear, go! (ELLEN *goes out.*)

Enter CONRAD.

BEATA.

Has every one come?

CONRAD.

All but Baron Richard.

BEATA.

You may announce luncheon, then. (CONRAD *goes out. A moment later he throws open the doors, and* BARON LUDWIG, PRINCE USINGEN, BARON BRACHTMANN, *and* KELLINGHAUSEN *enter.*)

BEATA.

Prince—Herr von Brachtmann—how do you do? (*To* BARON LUDWIG.) Your Excellency, you are to sit on my right.

BARON LUDWIG.

You do me too much honour. (CONRAD *closes the folding-doors.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

And now, gentlemen, shall we begin *à la Russe*, with a little caviare? (*He leads the others to the table near the sofa, where cold dishes and liqueurs are set out.*)

PRINCE.

Your true German can't abide a Russian, but we all adore their caviare.

BARON LUDWIG.

Where can my brother be? The feast is given for him and he is the last to appear.

BRACHTMANN.

He's probably doing what we all do the day after. Poring over the papers.

PRINCE.

And wondering how it is that yesterday's laurels have already turned into thorns.

BARON LUDWIG.

Ah, that's part of the game.

PRINCE.

No, it's the end of the game.

BEATA.

What do you mean, Prince?

PRINCE.

That our growth ceases when we gain our end. Attainment means being nailed fast—nailed to a cross, sometimes!

KELLINGHAUSEN.

(*While* CONRAD *hands about glasses of wine.*) Gentlemen, won't you drop your epigrams and try some of my port?

PRINCE.

It's his Excellency's doing. He always begins!

Enter a footman.

THE FOOTMAN.

Baron Richard von Völkerlingk. (*There is an expectant murmur.*)

Enter RICHARD.

BRACHTMANN (*aside to* PRINCE).

I told you there was nothing wrong.

PRINCE.

Wait and see.

RICHARD (*kissing* BEATA'S *hand*).

Forgive my being so late. A dozen things turned up at the last moment. Excuse me, Michael. (*The* PRINCE *makes a sign to* BRACHTMANN.)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

(*Shaking hands composedly with* RICHARD.) Don't mention it, my dear fellow. We are lucky to get you at all. The man of the hour—you can't have a moment to yourself.

RICHARD.

I've not had many yet. (*Shakes hands with him again and then turns to the others.*)

BEATA.

Shall we have luncheon? Völkerlingk, you can join us when you've had your caviare. (RICHARD *makes a gesture refusing the hors-d'œuvre.*)

BRACHTMANN (*aside to the* PRINCE).

Well?

PRINCE.

Irreproachable, as usual.

BRACHTMANN.

Thank God! (*They all seat themselves.*)

PRINCE (*to* BARON LUDWIG).

I can't make your brother out. You know him better than we do. Look at his face—what's the matter with him?

BARON LUDWIG.

We are such complicated machines, your Highness. It's impossible to explain any one with a word.

BEATA.

Take a hundred, then. (*With a short excited laugh.*) Life is long enough!

KELLINGHAUSEN (*to himself*).

Yes. Life is long enough.

RICHARD.

Instead of discussing my appearance I wish you would criticise my speech.

PRINCE.

What a *gourmet* he is, Countess! He wants the disapproval of his friends to season the praise of his enemies!

RICHARD.

Now, then, Brachtmann?

BRACHTMANN.

Why, my dear fellow, if you insist—I must tell you frankly that I had hoped you would lay more stress on the view of marriage as a divine institution.

RICHARD.

I have the greatest respect for that view of marriage, but I fear it might have invalidated the scientific side of my argument. What do you say, Prince?

PRINCE.

And what if it did? It's much more gratifying to our vanity to think ourselves the objects of divine solicitude than the victims of natural law. (BRACHTMANN *and* BARON LUDWIG *protest.* BEATA *laughs.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Really, Usingen——!

BARON LUDWIG.

Isn't your Highness's scepticism a little overdone? Surely society has made us the natural protectors of the social order. The order may change with the times—all we ask is that it should maintain the moral balance of power. (BEATA *laughs.*) You are amused, Countess?

BEATA (*still laughing*).

I was only laughing to think how often I'd heard it before—the moral balance of power, and all the rest! I'm sure our ancestors sang the same song when they threw their victims to Moloch. And our souls are still thrown by the million to the Moloch

of social expediency. We are all expected to sacrifice our personal happiness to the welfare of the race! (*She laughs excitedly.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN (*almost threateningly*).

Beata!

BARON LUDWIG.

Countess, you are conjuring up a phantom.

BEATA.

It may be a phantom, but it has us by the throat. —(*To* RICHARD.) What are you thinking of, Völkerlingk? You are not going to refuse our celebrated game-pie?

RICHARD.

I beg your pardon. I wasn't thinking. (*He helps himself to the dish.*)

BEATA.

You must know that that pie is an invention of my own!

PRINCE.

Dear me, Countess, are you at home in every branch of learning?

BEATA.

Oh, I had the making of a great cook in me. I believe I'm the last of the old school—the model

housekeeper, the domestic wife, the high-priestess of the family! (*She goes on laughing excitedly and* MICHAEL *nervously echoes her laugh.*)

RICHARD.

(*Making a perceptible effort to change the conversation.*) My dear Countess, no one ever ventures to dispute your statements. But there is one family about which I want to say a word—and that is the one we are in. (*Rising.*) I drink to the house of Kellinghausen!

THE OTHERS.

Hear—hear!

RICHARD.

The house of Kellinghausen! As I look back over my life, I don't know how to sum up all I owe to it. (*He turns to* BEATA.) To you, my dear friend——

KELLINGHAUSEN (*with forced gaiety*).

Is this a settlement in full, my dear fellow?

RICHARD.

(*Taken aback, but recovering himself instantly.*) You're right, Michael. There's no use trying; but there's something I want to say to *you.*

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Hear! hear!

RICHARD (*to the others*).

Since yesterday, you all know what I owe him. My success is his doing, all his doing. If I've gained my end, if I've reached the goal at last, it's to Kellinghausen I owe it. Here's to my good friend and yours!

THE OTHERS.

Hear! Hear! (*They clink their glasses.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

(*With a strained laugh, as he and* RICHARD *touch glasses.*) You might have left that out.

RICHARD.

I should have written it if I hadn't said it.

KELLINGHAUSEN (*still on his feet*).

Gentlemen—Beata—I may speak for all of you, I believe? I think our friend Völkerlingk proved conclusively yesterday that if he has taken my place it is because he has the best right to it. (*On the verge of an outburst.*) A better right to it—than—(*He is checked by a terrified glance from* BEATA, *who utters a low exclamation.*) Well—well—I'm not much of a speech-maker.—Gentlemen—Beata—long life to our friend Völkerlingk—long life to my successor!

BEATA.

(*In a low voice, while the others gather about* RICHARD.) Long life to him! (*She presses her hand to her heart, and rests heavily against the arm of her chair.*)

PRINCE (*to* KELLINGHAUSEN).

Is anything wrong with the Countess?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Beata!

BEATA (*raising herself with a smile*).

Yes?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Would you not rather go into the drawing-room? You look tired. (*She shakes her head.*)

RICHARD.

(*In a formal tone, with a glance at* MICHAEL.) We all beg of you, Countess——

BEATA.

(*Looking from one to the other with growing apprehension.*) No—no—no—I'm quite—quite—on the contrary—*I* have a toast to propose. (RICHARD *makes a startled gesture.*) Yes—a toast of my own! But please all sit down first——

PRINCE.

Woman disposes!

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Beata, you are overtaxing yourself. Be careful.

BEATA.

My dear friends, you all go on wishing each other a long life—but which of us is really alive? Which of us really dares to live? Somewhere, far off in the distance, we catch a glimpse of life—but we hide our eyes and shrink away from it like transgressors. And that's our nearest approach to living! Do you really think you're alive—any one of you? Or do you think I am? (*She springs up with an inspired look.*) But I, at least—I—whose whole life is one long struggle against death—I who never sleep, who hardly breathe, who barely stand—I at least know how to laugh, how to love life and be thankful for it! (*She staggers to her feet, raising her glass, her voice no more than a hoarse whisper.*) And as the only living soul among you, I drink to the joy of living!

THE OTHERS (*holding out their glasses*).

Good! Good! Bravo!

BEATA.

(*Draws a deep breath, sets down her glass, and looks about her confusedly. Her eyes rest on* RICH-

ARD, *and then turn to* MICHAEL, *to whom she speaks.*) I think I will take your advice and go into the other room for a little while. (*She rises with an effort.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN.

There, Beata! I warned you.

BARON LUDWIG (*offering her his arm*).

Won't you take my arm, Countess?

BEATA.

No, no—thanks! Michael, make my excuses. I shall be back in a few minutes. (*She lingers in the doorway with a last smile and a last look at* RICHARD.) Good-bye. I shall be back—in a few minutes. (*Goes out.*)

KELLINGHAUSEN (*to the others*).

Don't be alarmed. My wife often breaks down in this way—I knew by her excitement that it was coming. Please sit down again. I assure you that in a few minutes she—(*A heavy fall is heard in the next room.* RICHARD *starts violently.* MICHAEL *half springs from his seat, but controls himself with an effort. There is a short pause.*)—she'll be coming back laughing as usual. (*Whispers are heard behind the door to the left.* RICHARD *is seen to listen intently.*) What are you listening to? What's the matter?

RICHARD (*agitated*).

I beg your pardon—I thought I— (ELLEN *is heard to utter a piercing scream. The men start to their feet.* MICHAEL *rushes out.*)

BARON LUDWIG.

Surely that was Countess Ellen's voice?

PRINCE.

It doesn't look as if the Countess were going to come back laughing as usual.

MICHAEL *enters with a ghastly face.*

KELLINGHAUSEN (*hoarsely*).

The nearest doctor—any one—quick! (*Goes out again.* RICHARD *makes a motion as though to follow him, then turns and rushes out of the door to the right.*)

BRACHTMANN.

The Countess is subject to such attacks; but this seems—different.

PRINCE.

H'm—yes—quite so. (*There is a long silence.*)

BRACHTMANN (*to* BARON LUDWIG).

Your brother may not be able to find a doctor.

BARON LUDWIG.

We must hope for the best. (*Another silence.*)

PRINCE.

Perhaps we had better be going——

BRACHTMANN.

(*Nods his assent; then to* BARON LUDWIG.) Are you coming?

BARON LUDWIG.

I shall wait for my brother. (*He shakes hands with them.*)

PRINCE.

H'm. (*He and* BRACHTMANN *go out.* BARON LUDWIG *walks up and down the room shaking his head.*)

Enter CONRAD.

BARON LUDWIG.

Well?

CONRAD.

I can't say yet, your Excellency. (*He goes to the table.*) We are looking for the drops. Countess Ellen gave them to the Countess herself before luncheon.

BARON LUDWIG.

I thought I saw something in her hand at luncheon. Has any one looked in her hand?

CONRAD.

No. (*He goes out. There is a pause.*)

Enter RICHARD *and a doctor.*

RICHARD.

Well? Has anything——

BARON LUDWIG.

Nothing.

RICHARD.

Will you come this way, doctor?

THE DOCTOR.

Thank you. (RICHARD *and the doctor go out.* BARON LUDWIG *continues to pace the floor.*)

Enter NORBERT *by door on the right.*

NORBERT.

Uncle, what has happened? I've just met Brachtmann and Usingen. They said—uncle— (BARON LUDWIG *points silently to the door on the left.* NORBERT *hurries through it. Another pause.* BARON LUDWIG *continues to pace up and down. The doctor,* RICHARD *and* MICHAEL *come slowly into the room.*)

THE DOCTOR (*after a silence*).

Count, I am extremely sorry to have come too late. But it may be some comfort to you to know that I could have done nothing. Death was the result of heart disease—the end must have been instantaneous. May I ask who was the Countess's regular physician?

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Dr. Kahlenberg.

THE DOCTOR.

I will notify him at once. Permit me to offer my sympathy.

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Thank you, doctor. (*Shakes his hand and accompanies him to the door. The doctor goes out.* BARON LUDWIG *shakes* KELLINGHAUSEN'S *hand silently, nods to* RICHARD *and withdraws.*)

RICHARD.

Thank you, Michael — for letting me be with her——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Read this. (*Hands him* BEATA'S *letter.*)

RICHARD.

(*Takes the letter, shudders at sight of the handwriting, tries to read it, and then hands it back.*) I cannot——

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Then I will read it to you. It's meant for both of us. (*He reads.*) "Dear Michael, even if the poison is found in me they will think I took it by mistake. To avoid suspicion I shall do it while we are all at luncheon. I see that some one must pay

the penalty—better I than he. He has his work before him—I have lived my life. And so I mean to steal a march on him. Whatever you have agreed upon between you, my death will cancel the bargain —he cannot die now without causing the scandal you have been so anxious to avert. I have always loved happiness, and I find happiness now in doing this for his sake, and the children's and yours. Beata." As she says, this cancels our agreement. You see that I must give you back your word.

RICHARD.

And you see, Michael——

Enter NORBERT.

NORBERT.

(*Throws himself weeping into* KELLINGHAUSEN'S *arms.*) Uncle Michael!

KELLINGHAUSEN.

Go, my son — go to Ellen. (NORBERT *wrings* RICHARD'S *hand without speaking, and goes out.*)

RICHARD.

And you see, Michael, that I live because I must —that I live—because I am dead——

CURTAIN.

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Sudermann, Hermann
The joy of living (Es lebe das Leben)

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